PSYCHOLOGY AND MYSTICAL EXPERIENCE

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Psychology and Mystical Experience

BY

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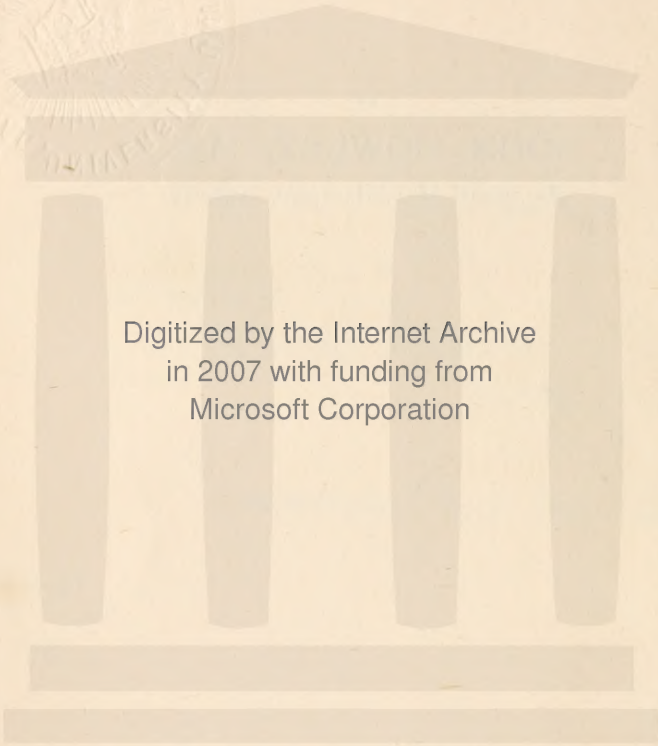

To the Memory

of

FATHER JAMES MALLAC, S.J.

Professor of Philosophy at University College,

Dublin, 1888

These Pages are

Dedicated

With Reverence and Affection

"Nevertheless, I accept the aid of experience and learning, and if through ignorance I should err, it is not my intention to depart from the sound doctrine of our holy mother the Catholic Church. I resign myself absolutely to her light, and submit to her decisions, and moreover to the better judgment herein of private men, be they who they may."

St. John of the Cross. The Assent of Carmel. Prologue

"In omni re, quae sentitur sive quae cognoscitur, interius latet ipse Deus."

St. Bonaventure. De Reductione artium ad theologiam.

PREFACE

This book came into being as a natural development of the Introduction. In 1913 I was asked to write the Bulletin for the June number of *Studies* dealing with recent books on the psychology of religious experience. The successive developments of this article form the various chapters of the present work and were published from time to time as separate articles in *Studies* and in the *Irish Ecclesiastical Record*. Although the work was practically complete in 1914 the war rendered publication in book form impracticable until the present year.

JOHN HOWLEY.

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PSYCHOLOGY AND MYSTICAL EXPERIENCE

INTRODUCTION

GENERAL VIEW OF THE PSYCHOLOGY OF RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

SINCE William James wrote his "Varieties of Religious Experience," psychologists have shown an ever growing interest in the psychic phenomena of religious life. His book set a fashion and transformed an outlook. That crude medical materialism which he ridiculed and riddled no longer holds the place of honour in any serious discussion; it is no longer good form for the serious man of science to explain St. Teresa in terms of nervous pathology. We have but to contrast the attitude of Binet-Sanglé with Leuba, and still more with Delacroix, towards the great Catholic mystics, to see what a revolution has come about in the mind of agnostic psychology. The sub-conscious has replaced the morbid, and a bold attempt is made to bring religious experience within the domain of positive psychology.

But is such a science of religious life possible, a positive science dealing with observed fact, and free from all metaphysical and theological presuppositions? Those who reply in the affirmative point out that the psychic phenomena of religion are facts of conscious-

ness which can be ascertained like other forms of consciousness. They can be compared, analysed and tabulated, their sequences noted, and their relations with somatic conditions, normal or morbid, duly observed. We may thus hope to discover the laws which govern the sequence of religious phenomena of a psychic order and to establish their determinism, or causality as that is understood by positive science. What if these facts are beyond the range of experiment, they do not differ in that respect from many other observed facts whose place in positive science is unquestioned. The field of experiment in psychology is very restricted, though its literature is immense.[1] Great ingenuity has been expended on psychological experiment, but the results are meagre and uncertain at best. If we are to have a positive science of psychology at all, our mainstay must be the observed facts of consciousness, using experiment where we can as an auxiliary.

But where are we to obtain these observed facts in the religious order? Professor Stratton, in the preface to his "Psychology of the Religious Life," admits that there are objections "to basing a psychological account of religion mainly upon answers received from individuals when directly questioned in regard to their religious experience, even when these answers are

[1] *Cf.* de la Vaissière: *Eléments de Psychologie Expérimentale*: Beauchesne, 1912. Index Bibliographique.

supplemented by material gathered from life-histories, especially from autobiographies of the religious. It is true that a method which has been followed with signal effect by James, Starbuck, Coe, Pratt, and others is certainly justified. And yet the persons most easily reached by such means are, for the most part, adherents of one and the same religion ; they are of the Occident, and naturally show a preponderance of that special type of character that is ready to grant to a stranger an access to the secret places of personality."

Stratton himself prefers to gather his facts of consciousness from the rituals, myths, etc., of various peoples, but this involves getting at the facts of consciousness at second hand by inference from their crystallizations in primitive myth and dogma. Further this inferential process becomes quite chaotic when strict agnostic neutrality is duly observed as to the moral and metaphysical values of the data. The results, however valuable as a by-product in the study of comparative religion, are of little or no psychological value ; the study of popular fiction and ballads of all nations would afford almost as good material in the study of the emotivity of crowds. Both processes have their value for the student of the psychology of crowds, but the results are too general to be of use, as far as they affect individual psychology. We are, of course, assuming Stratton's standpoint of indifferentism to be taken, for his results, when inter-

preted, are of much interest. But in their agnostic severity, they mean chaos. Starbuck, in his " Psychology of Religion," has used the question-circular method with extraordinary energy and really remarkable skill. The questions he sent out were drafted with great acumen, the replies tabulated, analysed and plotted into curves with infinite patience. His results are most curious, but his method has the defects Stratton points out, it is very limited. Yet, as a study of " conversion," as understood by Evangelical Protestants, his work is of the very first importance to the psychologist.

James and more perfectly Delacroix have derived their facts of observation largely from religious biography. This method has the advantage of looking at the facts in their life-setting, and not as isolated data, and the disadvantage of limiting their number The biographical psychologist has also to rely on his documents uncontrolled by personal inquiry. He must take on trust the statements of the author or check them by a criticism based on philosophic principles which go beyond the purview of merely positive science. Hence it is almost impossible to exclude the factor of prejudice, apologetic or anti-apologetic, in forming his judgment as to the scientific value of the facts recorded. A fact for anyone is a fact apperceived. However it comes into the mind originally, it stays and rests there as a fact known by the relations

it sets up with our pre-existing mental complex, and chameleon-like takes its colour from its mental surroundings. If we would present it to others we present it as we apperceive it, and we colour even the external physical fact with something of ourselves. But the facts of consciousness are double-dyed, by him who originally perceives and records them, and then by the critical psychologist who reads and appreciates the record. The fact at least filters through two personalities before it is catalogued and cross-indexed. We cannot get rid of this double distortion from the point of view of positive science. We may tear a fact from our mental soil, but some of our earth will cling to its roots. The effort to be scientifically superior to our prejudices, should we suspect their existence, will cause us to maul, perhaps fatally, the fact we try to present objectively. We must either give it as it exists for us, or it will be an abortion, not viable for the purposes of science.

It is this element in the psychic fact, as presented, which seems to call for criteria which merely positive science cannot legitimately give. The agnostic psychologist philosophises quite as much as the Christian apologist when he comes to deal with psychic facts of the religious order, but his metaphysical prejudices are expressed in the current language of scientific dogmatism, and so escape challenge. He professes to speak as a man of science, positive, exact, dealing with

facts and their immediate relations, but the brief he speaks from is marked " Metaphysics," in the corner. And he will continue to do so, as Dr. Maréchal puts it:—

" Par malheur, chacun naît philosophe ; et trop de nos savants (incrédules ou non) portent cette tare sans s'en douter. On les voit, à tout propos, sous pretexte de science, foncer tête baissée sur le réel, oubliant ou ignorant qu'ils font là souvent de très mauvaise philosophie, et que, par contre, un grain de bonne et franche philosophie, leur apprenant à distinguer le relatif de l'absolu, les remettrait excellemment dans leur rôle d'hommes de science. Car il faut être déjà quelque peu philosophe pour s'abstenir à point de philosopher."[1]

If, therefore, we are to have a psychology of religious experience, it cannot be merely a positive science on pain of illusion and sterility. Delacroix has declared " that all one has the right to exact from the psychologist is that he respects the integrity of the fact." The ecstasy of a Plotinus, of an Indian Yoga, of a St. Teresa, is a fact of religious experience, but is it the same integrally in the three ? Can we make abstraction of the One of Plotinus, the Nirvana of the Yoga, the God of St. Teresa, and yet preserve the integrity of the psychic fact ? Yes, if we postulate

[1] *Science empirique et Psychologie religieuse.* Notes critiques, par Joseph Maréchal, docteur és sciences. Extrait des Recherches de Science religieuse, 1912, N. 1.

that ecstasy is a morbid psychose, or that the One of Plotinus, the Nirvana of the Yoga, and the God of St. Teresa are but extrapositions of the sub-conscious. What is this but replacing the dogmatism of the priest by the more offensive dogmatism of the professor?

Quite another species of psychologists have dealt with the data of spiritual experience, and in quite another mode. From the Fathers of the Desert to the Curé d'Ars, from the Anamchara of the Culdees to the Carmelite, Franciscan, Dominican, Jesuit "director" of to-day, we have had a long series of trained minds dealing with souls in the confessional, interrogating and advising, noting progress, repairing relapses, forging that wonderful chain of moral and mystical theology from the accumulated experience of ages and generations. They built up no mere speculative science of the life of the soul, but a doctrine that was lived, a science that was an art. That ascetical theology represents the life experience of countless souls of every degree of spiritual culture generalized and codified in the light of Catholic theology. These directors had their "prejudices," but they had also unrivalled opportunities for psychological observation, and even, within the limits of these "prejudices," of unlimited psychological experiment. Modern science, so-called, rules them out of court; they know, perhaps, too much.

What may we legitimately include under the term

" religious experience " ? Pacheu, perhaps, gives us the best answer. " C'est seulement une expression abrégée pour désigner les phenomènes psychologiques d'ordre religieux, observés et analysés par les sujets que nous étudions."[1] A religious experience would, therefore, be some psychic event of which we were aware and could give some account ; it must be a fact of consciousness, something felt or known. We could not, for example, speak of our baptism, unless we were adults at the time, as a religious experience in this sense. We could say the same of Extreme Unction where the recipient had fainted. The subject must be conscious of what has happened to some extent to make it a religious *experience* in this special sense. For it must be remembered that what we are concerned with in the psychological study of religious experience is primarily what is felt or known by the subject. That, of course, is but the fringe of the event from the religious point of view,[2] but it is the starting point for the psychologist. Then the event must be religious in character, but we must take the term religious in a

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[1] Jules Pacheu : *L'Expérience Mystique et L'Activité Subconsciente.* Paris, Perrin et Cie, 1911, p. 57.

[2] *Cf.* St. John of the Cross, " *The Dark night of the Soul.*" Book I. cap. vi., § 6. " But these persons will feel and taste God, as if He were palpable and accessible to them, not only in communion but in all their other acts of devotion. All this is a very great imperfection, and directly at variance with the nature of God, Who demands the purest faith."

fairly wide sense if we would include in our scope the mystical experiences of the Neoplatonist and the Buddhist.

Outside those experiences, which may be classed as mystical in the strict sense of the term, that wide group of phenomena termed "conversion" by Evangelical Protestants has met with the largest share of attention at the hands of the psychologist. Starbuck's "Psychology of Religion" might almost be called a monograph of "Conversion." James had already dealt with it in his "Varieties of Religious Experience," but his pupil has almost exhausted its possibilities as far as can be done by the method of the question-circular. Starbuck does not limit himself to "conversion" cases only, but deals also in like manner with cases not involving "conversion" in this special evangelical sense. But he traces many analogies between the "once-born" and the "twice-born," and concludes, "It is safe to say that conversion is not a unique experience, but has its correspondences in the common events of religious growth."[1] For Starbuck "conversion" is very largely a phenomenon of adolescence, and he lays much stress on the occurrence in general of this psychic change at the period of puberty in both sexes. He considers that "there are two essential aspects of conversion, that in which there is self-surrender and forgiveness, accom-

[1] Starbuck, *Psychology of Religion*, 3d. Ed., p. 204.

panied by a sense of harmony with God ; and that in which the new life bursts forth spontaneously as the natural recoil from the sense of sin, or as the result of a previous act of the will in striving toward righteousness."[1] We have here then as psychic elements a state of tension, a sense of insufficiency and discord, followed by a relaxation of psychic tension, with a concomitant sense of relief, of harmony, of capacity and power. This is the psychic process considered in itself, apart from its theological setting. The early Reformers interpreted it as theologians and built on this psychose their well-known doctrines of Salvation by Faith and Assurance, and it is as dogmatised and crystallized in their confessional formulas that the question has been studied by Catholic theologians. The original psychose, *per se*, the rock on which Reformation theology has been built, has met with but small attention at their hands.[2] This is unfortunate, for the doctrines of Luther and Calvin have encountered many a change, and in their purity are somewhat to seek to-day, but we find " conversion " *qua* psychose a permanent fixed feature in Protestant religious life. Its value and meaning are variously interpreted, biologically, mystically, and

[1] Starbuck, p. 100.

[2] For details of the conversion psychose in the case of Luther himself *cf* Hartmann Grisar's *Luther* (vol. i. cap 10, vol. ii. pp. 272 et seq. vol. iii. p. 26 note. vol. iv. *passim* particularly cap 28 §3 pp. 431 et seq.)

modernistically, by cerebral short circuiting, by subconscious projection, as morbid, as divine, as pathological and as a " standing miracle." We see it as a leit-motif in Dr. Dale of Birmingham,[1] in Auguste Sabatier,[2] in Dr. Marshall P. Talling,[3] in Miss Evelyn Underhill.[4] The last writer, in her book, " The Mystic Way," as well as in her earlier, saner and weightier work, " Mysticism," seems to treat conversion in the Evangelical Protestant sense as identical with conversion, as the term is understood by Catholic spiritual writers, and regards it as the entrance to the mystic way, the beginning of mystical life. But are these two types of conversion identical? It is, of course, open to a writer to give the experience in each case such a theological interpretation as to make them identical or opposites. We have not at present to consider their values or signification, their spiritual cause or purport. We will regard them merely as psychic processes, and so doing we can see at least one specific psychic difference between them. Evangelical conversion has in well-marked cases as its normal and expected resultant a state of *assurance*, Catholic conversion a state of *compunction*. If you address the question, " Are you saved? " to the average Protestant who has experienced " conversion," he will have

1 P. W. Dale, LL.D.: *The Living Christ and the Four Gospels.*

2 A. Sabatier: *Outlines of a Philosophy of Religion.*

3 Marshall Talling, Ph.D.: *The Science of Spiritual Life.*

4 Evelyn Underhill: *The Mystic Way.*

no hesitation in answering affirmatively, but no Catholic could dare say more than he hoped to be. These two answers are not merely expressions of dogmatic prejudices; they have a psychic value of their own. The Protestant *feels* that he is saved, that he is conscious of a state of assurance, of unbounded confidence. He theologizes the cause and end of this assurance and this confidence; that is challengeable interpretation, but he feels and is acutely aware of these affective states. He is "saved" psychologically, for he feels safe. The dominant feeling of the Catholic, on the other hand, is sorrow and hope, the warp and woof of compunction. Dogma apart, he cannot truly answer the question, "Are you saved?" in the affirmative, for his sins are ever before him. That this is a normal psychic state in the truly converted Catholic, no reader of the lives of the Saints, no student of the "Imitation of Christ" can venture to deny. It is in no perfunctory ceremonial sense that St. Teresa speaks of herself as a great sinner, and is always recalling her sins, to the no little scandal of many good tepid worldly Catholics. She who had led a singularly blameless life is at one with great penitents like St. Augustine in the permanence of her compunction. Is it not playing with words, then, to regard these two species of conversion as one and the same? They are manifestly two distinct psychoses.

Catholic writers who have dealt with evangelical con-

version in its psychic aspects have been chiefly impressed with the extravagant features presented in "revivals." Here we have psychoses provoked which present many morbid features. "It is of extreme importance," writes Starbuck,[1] "in considering anything so complex and delicate as the religious instinct—especially when it is liable to be wrought upon vigorously, as is done in the crisis called conversion—to stop and observe some of the danger points, at which people may easily be led beyond the limits of the normal, and thereby suffer irretrievable loss. The most glaring danger is found in the emotionalism and excitement of religious revivals. The effect is to induce a state of mere feeling which, when it has passed, leaves no spiritual residuum; to drive persons to irrational conduct, so that when the reaction sets in, they reject not only their first profession, but the whole of religion." After a masterly analysis of revival types of conversion and their sequels, Starbuck concludes that "a certain initiative of religious ecstasy, or of guilt, combined with an element of originality in temperament, tends to become automatically cumulative, until the emotional state chases everything but itself out of the field of consciousness." We have thus revival insanity with its analogies in the convulsionaires of St. Médard and the extravagancies of the various sects of Illuminati in the Middle Ages. Insanity as a post-mission phenomenon is not unknown in Catholic Ireland.

[1] Starbuck, *Psychology of Religion*, p. 165.

The medical materialist will lump all these excesses, and regard them as typical of the religious spirit, but the unprejudiced psychologist will set them apart for classification among morbid psychoses as the exceptional, and not the normal, types of conversion.

It is in its resultant stage that evangelical conversion presents features for which we cannot find equivalents in Catholic experience. That note of assurance is not found. But we can find many parallels for the initial stages of this psychose. That acute and torturing sense of psychic tension, plus insufficiency, the conviction of sin, is to be found in many spiritual states recorded by Catholic writers. Temptations to discouragement, to despair, accidie or spiritual sloth, the state of the scrupulous who are tormented by trifles, these are but a few of experiences common in Catholic spirituality which seem to have this psychic factor. That state, so often so very secular, known as "acute worry," is a kindred psychose. The *scrupulous state* is perhaps the best marked type. Some medical writers have called this state "the disease of doubt." Father A. Gemelli, in his exhaustive monograph, "De Scrupulis," gives many instances of spiritual worry bordering on mania, of the sense of sin pushed to very madness. He shows that on its psychic side this state of scruples may become a veritable disease. Pierre Janet classes it with kin-

dred psychoses as a disease, psychasthenia. As a psychiatrist he sees it as a morbid state, just as the schoolmen saw it as a vice, pusillanimity.[1] For him it is a psycho-neurose akin to neurasthenia, and perhaps to certain types of paranoia. Doctors view life clinically, and would class Luther, Bunyan and Loyola as morbid cases. The three suffered from acute scruples, and Father Gemelli still retains so much of his early training as a physician that he is sorely put to it to save the reputation of St. Ignatius. While honouring the physician, we must avoid medical materialism. Extreme cases are useful clinical types, but it is dangerous to generalize from them. One of the characteristics of the psychasthenic is a feeling of incompleteness, of insufficiency, of ineptitude, of incapacity, all the psychic qualities of that accidie which the late Bishop of Oxford so well described.[2] Modern science would reduce a deadly sin to a psycho-neurose.

Can we discover in religious experience any element which we cannot reduce to a state of mind or a state of nerves? The positive psychologist would deny either the existence or the necessity of any such psychic X. Leuba declares that there is nothing " in the life of the great Spanish mystic (St. Teresa), no desire, sentiment, thought, vision, illumination, which obliges

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1 *Cf.* D. Thomae *Summa*, IIa, IIae, q. cxxxiii.

2 Francis Paget, D.D., late Bishop of Oxford: *The Sorrow of the World, with an introductory essay on Accidie.* Longmans.

one to serious consideration of any transcendental causes."[1] Such denial is, of course, a methodical necessity for the positive psychologist who would exclude " metaphysics." Feeling the inadequacy of his science to account for the higher mystical phenomena as an output of the ordinary mechanism of consciousness, he falls back, like Delacroix, on the sub-consciousness, that Mrs. Harris of positivism. Maine de Biran had suggested the sub-consciousness as the vehicle of Divine Grace in its action on the soul.[2] Delacroix takes this hypothesis, and, by postulating for the sub-consciousness powers of a quite transcendent order, calmly converts the vehicle into an automobile. We can account for much that is extraordinary if we only give our sub-liminal selves enough scope, or rope ; that is, of course, if we are quite set on eliminating God from His cosmos and His micro-cosmos. Sanctity is but religious genius, and genius is an outcrop of the great sub-liminal Self. We thus bring the most transcendent phenomena well within the domain of " positive " science.

Pacheu[3] and Gemelli[4] have criticised this theory of

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1 Quoted by J. de la Vaissière, *Eléments de Psychologie Experimentale*, p. 305.

2 Sharpe : *Mysticism, its true nature and value*, p. 115.

3 Pacheu : *L'Expérience Mystique et l'Activité Subconsciente*. Perrin et Cie. 1911.

4 A. Gemelli : *L'origine subconsciente dei fatti mistici*. Firenze Libreria Editrice Florentina. 1913.

the sub-conscious as the efficient factor in mystical experiences with great acumen, but we may well doubt if their replies will convince the positivists. The interpretation of experience cannot, as we have seen, be purely a matter of positive science; it is determined by higher principles, and is only acceptable where these principles are accepted.

Numberless are the attempts which have been made to define the terms Mysticism and Mystical. The Rev. W. K. Fleming[1] gives a fine varied selection, taken, as he tells us, from Dean Inge's Christian Mysticism, Appendix A. They range from mere expressions of vague pietism applicable to almost any marked religious experience to Ribet's ultra narrow, "It is a supernatural drawing of the soul towards God, in which the soul is passive, resulting in an inward illumination and caress; these supersede thought, surpass all human effort, and are able to have over the body an influence (retentissement) marvellous and irresistible." What St. John of the Cross calls the Dark Night of the Spirit would not fall within the limits of this definition, yet it is a well-recognised mystical state. The same objection might be taken to Father Poulain's famous criterion, "The presence of God *felt*."[2] Joly's phrase, "Mysticism is the

[1] W. K. Fleming, M.A., B.D.: *Mystisicm in Christianity*. Robert Scott. 1913.

[2] Poulain: *Les Graces d'Oraison*, cinquième édition, 1906, cap. v.

love of God "[1] is, of course, too wide. We need some limitation, some test by which we can discriminate between experiences which are mystical and those which are not—in other words, a psychological definition rather than a philosophic one. When can a religious experience rightly be called mystical? Where are the frontiers of the mystical state? Miss Underhill considers conversion as the border line, taking the word in a fairly wide sense. But no Catholic writer would accept this view, for the word mystical has been restricted in Catholic usage to certain states of prayer of a non-discursive character. Broadly speaking, prayer falls into three categories, vocal prayer and meditation are, *per se*, non-mystical, and the controversy among Catholic spiritual writers is limited to this point: to what extent is contemplation mystical. Is all prayer in which there is no mental discourse mystical, or can we have a non-discursive prayer which is non-mystical, and, if so, when can we say that a certain type of contemplation is mystical? That is the question in dispute, and a very vexed one it is. To one school, of which Father Poulain is the chief, there is a form of contemplation, called the " prayer of simplicity," which is non-mystical, but is a sort of half-way house between meditation and mystical contemplation. It is an active and acquired contemplation to be distinguished from the passive and

[1] Henri Joly; *Psychologie des Saints*, troisiéme èdition, p. 40.

infused contemplation which is properly termed mystical. The other school, led by the Chanoine Saudreau and the late Father Ludovic de Besse, maintain that this distinction is the creation of certain later writers on mystical theology, and was unknown in earlier times and that the so-called active contemplation, if it is a genuine prayer, is rightly termed mystical.

The controversy may seem trivial, but a controversy about a diphthong once convulsed the Church. Behind this frontier dispute lie the questions of the continuity of spiritual life; whether the contemplative mystic is the product of a miracle or a normal growth in grace; and the spiritual dangers of quietism, or of quenching the spirit. Already there is quite a large literature on this disputed topic.

The absence of discursive movements of the mind is the keynote of all mystical experience. Of course, the term absence is here used in the relative sense, and is not meant to be taken with absolute literalness. In a meditation, as in vocal prayer, the mind works in its ordinary human fashion; we have "discourse of reason," and if need be, we can set out this discourse in words, and so make our mental prayer vocal. So, too, there is the succession of sentiments and affections. There is a mental movement, directed and controlled of course, but a movement. It is the absence of this movement which gave its name to the "prayer of quiet," The very name suggests the absence of the

normal mental work of reasoning, of successive feelings. We have thus a negative psychic characteristic of mystical prayer.

We have a positive element in that common feature of all prayer that is prayer, attention. But it is attention with a difference. In meditation, attention costs an effort ; we must force our minds to follow the points, and not to wander off in all directions. We must force our other faculties to keep in step ; like Martha, we are busied about many things. Hence the sense of effort in attention.

In the " prayer of quiet," as it is a prayer, there must be attention ; how, then, can it be called *quiet* ? Let us go to the child for a parable. Every teacher knows that to hold a child's attention you must arouse his interest, for his attention is wholly spontaneous, and he is incapable of voluntary attention. Let him be interested in what is for him some new and wonderful thing, and all his restlessness ceases ; his whole soul is fixed, and all the world beside vanishes for the moment, save the one object which interests him. And when the Master Himself is that object ?

Passive attention is then the positive psychic element in mystical contemplation. But attention to what ? There we are in full controversy. Are we to take the declarations of the mystics literally or analogically ? Poulain and his school favour literalism, Meynard, Saudreau and the others would interpret

widely. The controversy cannot be decided on psychological grounds, for it is strictly a question of the interpretation of experience, and that experience is of a most subtle character. St. Jeanne de Chantal relates in her depositions that when she questioned St. Francis de Sales about his inner experience, he told her: "These matters are so simple and delicate that one can say nothing about them when they are past." A constant cry of Blessed Angela of Foligno, when relating her experiences, is that her words are blasphemies; they cannot convey the reality.

This incapacity of the great mystics to express themselves, an incapacity inherent in the character of their experience which is essentially individual and incommunicable, is the source of most of the controversies as to the nature of the mystical state. The theologian, with his clear-cut definitions, is helpless when he comes to deal with mystical writings, unless he has had similar experience. Then he is very modest in his affirmations and denials. But in general the attitude of the theologian to the mystic is hostile, or, at best, apprehensive. Corruptio optimi pessima, and if mystical prayer is the apanage of sanctity, the corruption of mysticism is the mother of all disorder

It is curious and interesting to note how certain mystical eccentricities of Catholic origin have found a congenial home among certain types of Protestants. The *Guida* of Molinos and the *Moyen Court* of Madame

Guyon circulate widely as pious booklets in their English dress.[1] That they were condemned by Rome renders them "safe" for Protestant readers. It is a curious symptom, this ultra-passive type of devotion, in Protestant spiritual life; for their own analogue, Quakerism, has not been very popular. We have also various eccentric sects, the Christian Scientists among the crowd, whose processes have a basis of psychic passivity. We find even Buddhists, for whom psychic passivity is carried to the last extreme, getting a foothold in England. Spiritualists abound. Clearly, the theologian is justified in his mistrust of methods of devotion whose basis is a species of psychic passivity.

Not alone the theologian but the psychologist will be apprehensive. As Arcelin shows in his masterly monograph,[2] the artificial production of states of psychic passivity by hypnosis, or so-called mystical exercises, such as the various species of Yoga,[3] tends to a certain break up of the phenomenal "personality" with resultant psychic accidents, secondary states, hallucinations, etc. The soul is free-wheeling without

[1] *The Spiritual Guide*, by Michael de Molinos, edited with an introduction by Kathleen Lyttleton. Methuen. The Library of Devotion series.

A Short and Easy Method of Prayer, by Madame Guyon. Allenson Heart and Life Booklets, No. 14.

[2] Adrien Arcelin: *La Dissociation Psychologique, étude sur les phénomènes inconscients*. Paris, Blond et Barral, 1901.

[3] Stratton: *Psychology of the Religious Life*, p. 199.

a brake on an unknown slope, to speak again in a parable.

The distinction between the veritable "prayer of quiet" and "quietism" is not to be found in what we have defined to be the negative psychic characteristic of mystical prayer. Both have, in common, the absence of discursive reasoning, of mental images. Whether this absence of discourse is given or acquired does not afford a sufficient clue of itself, for the genuine contemplative has to bestir himself to clear his mind of importunate thoughts.[1] But we may possibly find it in what we have called the positive psychic element in mystical prayer, passive attention. When present in prayer, passive attention shows rather clearly the marks or signs by which the mind can recognise the "given," and distinguish it from the "acquired." Now, quietism would seem to have passivity without attention, to be a rest in self rather than a rest in God.[2]

It is this consciousness of the "given" in religious experience, both mystical and general, which has brought about that comparatively recent trend in apologetics, the attempt to find in spiritual experience the justification and the interpretation of the Christian creeds. No doubt, for its recipient, religious experi-

[1] *Cf.* St. John of the Cross: *Ascent of Carmel*, passim.

[2] *Cf. L'Ornament des noces spirituelles*, de Ruysbroeck l'Admirable traduit du flamand par Maurice Maeterlinck (Book II, chaps. 74 et seq.). Bruxelles, Lacombley, 1900.

ence has a mighty cogency. We get a very charming illustration of this in Dr. Dale's "The Living Christ and the Four Gospels." But its power is limited to the recipient, as James has pointed out. We cannot build an argument from our "moods." How can we convince the sceptic of their nature and value? Can we even show that they are uniform? "God leads every soul by a separate path, and you will scarcely meet with one spirit which agrees with another in one half of the way by which it advances."[1] So thought one who was not alone a great mystic himself but was the director of one of the most remarkable groups of mystics in the history of Christendom, the early Carmelites of the Teresian reform, headed by St. Teresa herself.

This immense variety and individual character of religious experience is a still greater obstacle to its employment to interpret and reconstruct religious dogma. The individual may well obtain "lights" in prayer, but what guarantee has *any one else* that they are not false beacons? Miss Underhill, in her book, "The Mystic Way," has attempted a reconstructive interpretation of the first beginnings of Christianity by a species of retrojection of what we find in modern mystics into the personalities of the New Testament. The result is fantastic from the

[1] St. John of the Cross: *The Living Flames*, stanza iii., § 63 (p. 98 in Baker's edition, 1912)

point of view of science, and offensive to the ordinary Christian. The New Mythology is a very turgid substitute for the old theology. Yet, " views " have one advantage over dogma, they can be disregarded without discomfort.

The insistence of Protestant apologists on religious experience and their use of it in exegesis is but the logical consequence of what has been said of " conversion " earlier that this psychose is the bed-rock of Protestantism. It is something the force of which they have felt ; it is cogent and conclusive for them, and they naturally think it valid for others. It would be interesting to know what percentage of these " twice-born " Protestants ever subsequently modify their basic outlook on religion. Newman and Staunton of St. Alban's, were " converted men," and we may trace in their lives something of that " assurance " as a sort of rudimentary survival. A statistic à la Starbuck of " converted men " who were converts to Anglicanism or Catholicism from Protestantism would be of enormous interest. It must be noted, however, that the argument from personal religious experience to the validity of the recipient's creed is not confined to undiluted Protestantism. " Well-informed members of the Church of England were prepared to recognise their shortcomings, and were quite aware how far the Anglican communion, as a whole, fall short in practice

of the standard held up by the Book of Common Prayer; but the one thing they never could and never would do was admit a doubt as to the reality of the Sacraments they had received—their Communions, their absolutions, *since to do so would be to deny the spiritual experience of a lifetime.*"[1] Quite another attitude is shown in the following maxim of St. John of the Cross: "The soul that leans upon its own understanding, sense, or feeling of its own—all this being very little and very unlike to God—in order to travel on the right road, is most easily led astray or hindered, because it is not perfectly blind in faith, which is its true guide."[2]

The one way is Assurance, the other the Fear of the Lord. And this is a psychic attitude, whatever be its theological import.

[1] Lord Haliax: *Leo XIII. and Anglican Orders*, p. 252. This was Newman's position in the last course of Advent Sermons which he preached as Vicar of St. Mary's before he retired to Littlemore (Dublin Review July, 1864, p. 186).

[2] St. John of the Cross: *Spiritual Maxims*, No. 29. (p. 191 Baker's edition *Living Flame*).

PART I

CONVERSION

CHAPTER I

PSYCHOLOGY OF A RETREAT

THE term "conversion," as meaning certain types of religious experience, has a very different sense in the mouth of a Catholic from what it bears on the lips of a Protestant. If a Catholic were to say that so-and-so was converted at a mission, he would mean something quite other than the Protestant speaking of a man converted at a revival. Either would use the word in the same sense when a mere change of dogmatic belief was meant; but, if there were no change of creed involved, the sense of the word would vary with the user. If one casually overheard one Catholic speaking of another as having been converted at the mission last year, one who knew the manner of speech of Catholics would think of the converted man rather as a reformed character than as one who had gained a new outlook on life, a new attitude to his Creator, a new orientation of existence. In the lives of the saints we find the word used with such connotation, but this hagiographic use is not the popular one, which merely implies some notable amendment of life due to religious motives. But when the Catholic writer or preacher speaks of the conversion of St. Francis of Assisi, or St. Ignatius of Loyola, or Blessed

Angela of Foligno, the word connotes a change of life as it were substantial, a polarization of the whole personality, such a deep-rooted transformation of the whole man as to deserve the name of "new birth." Thus, the word ranges in Catholic use from frequenting the sacraments after neglect to the seeding time of heroic virtues, from taking the pledge to the call of the saint.

Among Protestants, or at least among those who regard "conversion" as an essential or eminently desirable feature of religious life, the sense of the term has some analogies with the hagiographic use among Catholics. It implies a change of spiritual outlook rather than a mere correction of defects, and is intimately linked, historically at least, with the doctrines of the Reformers on Grace. Protestant theologians in general explain it in terms of more or less modified Calvinism. It is a very interesting speculation as to how far the process of conversion in use among Evangelicals is the product of the dogmatic theology of Luther and Calvin, and how far the source and origin of the Reformation doctrines. Did the Reformers theologise a psychose, or was the psychose the creation of their theology? Certainly there is an interplay between their doctrines and their spiritual experience. The total depravity of unregenerate man and his incapacity for any spiritual experience must lead to an enormous appreciation of any actual spiritual

experience. It would be an experimental proof of regeneration and salvation for the Calvinist. On the other hand, a striking consolation succeeding a marked spiritual depression would vividly impress the recipient and lead him to despise ordinary spiritual processes. He would exalt his own experience, and seek to generalize and rationalize it—in other words, to evolve a new theology and Church system. He would construct hypotheses to account for what he felt, and test these hypotheses by their power to reproduce the phenomena in himself and others. If he succeeded, a new dogma was born duly certified by subjective experience, more persuasive than much argument. What if the dogma varied, the psychose remained as the true " articulus stantis vel cadentis Ecclesiæ."

The dogmatic bearings of " conversion " and " salvation by faith " have been dealt with at length in every manual of dogmatic theology. It is with " conversion " as a psychose that the psychologist is primarily concerned. Its dogmatic implications are only of interest to him as factors in this psychose, and as such will only be referred to here.

Conversion in the Catholic use of the word has been provisionally defined by Father Th. Mainage, O.P., as a " religious phenomenon which begins without or within the sphere of Catholicism, and ends in a new and unlooked-for initiation in Catholic life of the person subject to it."[1] If we alter the words "Catholicism"

[1] Th. Mainage: *Introduction à la phychologie des convertis.* Paris Lecoffre, 1913, p. 25.

and " Catholic life" to "religion" and " religious life," the definition would apply with a fair amount of universality to both types of conversion, but would be rather too vague and general to describe and specify the type known as evangelical. James's definition refered to by Father Mainage on p. 44 would be, perhaps, preferable. William James would call conversion the passage slow or rapid which takes place when a soul finds happiness and harmony in the intuition of religious reality after an inward struggle dominated by the sense of its own weakness and misery. Here we may note that James lays stress on two features, the prior internal conflict and the intuition of religious reality. The first is a state of psychic stress, " the conviction of sin," as a condition precedent; the second seems to exclude the ordinary process of discourse. " James excludes from his inquiry those who arrive at religious facts by intellectual discourse. For him the religious phenomenon consists, above all, in an affective attitude, as is also Ribot's point of view with a slight difference."[1]

In the other and wider definition, the point of importance is the change implied in the " new and unlooked-for initiation in Catholic (or religious) life." This would seem to exclude much of the popular Catholic sense. Can we say that a man who, from

[1] de la Vaissière: *Eléments de psychologie expérimentale* Paris, Beauchesne, 1912, p. 310.

religious motives, corrects some bad habit, some vice, receives a new and unexpected initiation into Catholic life? From the point of view of Catholic dogma he begins a new life, but can we justify the phrase psychologically? His intellectual attitude towards religion is not substantially altered, but intellect is not the whole man. There is a change of will of grave import in one special line of conduct. If we assume that he realises this change as of vital importance to his whole religious life, it is hard to see that he has received no new initiation. The drunkard or the unchaste man who amends his life, and becomes sober and continent, does not merely correct one item of his mental and volitional composition; he removes an element from his psychic life which was incompatible with his religious progress. We cannot keep our vices or our virtues in watertight compartments. If we cure drunkenness, we heal much more than the mere inordinate taste for liquor. The weeding of the soul is not mere destruction of sins; it is a giving light and air to growing virtues. Hence any substantial amendment of vice may be fairly called a conversion, although the general psychic attitude may seemingly remain the same. A more careful and minute self-analysis will show that in such cases there is a quiet and steady change in the general psychic attitude, a process of mental growth, as well as increased volitional vigour. In our mental make-up we find a

vast number of images, ideas, concepts and propositions of every variety and strength which flit in and out of our field of consciousness, and influence our emotions, volitions and acts, and, in turn, are influenced by them. Stir an emotion and an idea or a conviction leaps up, resurrect an assent and some passion blazes. A vice, a habit of sin, calls into our field of consciousness and keeps there its confederate images and notions; it thrusts down into our depths its antagonist concepts and principles; it not merely works evil but it inhibits good. If we break away from a vice, we not merely clear our minds of its attendants, but we make room for all that it checked and stifled.

But what is involved psychologically in the extirpation of a vice? Bad habits, like good ones, are the product of repeated acts. Iteration of our acts, as it were, makes tracks for their successors; the first sin is the path finder for its fellows, and the blazed trail grows into an automobile track. Before we can restore the broad highway to tillage, we must stop the traffic. We can cause a habit good or bad to decay by passive disuse; the drunkard may become sober in a measure if he is restrained from all access to liquor—indefinitely. The convict won't increase his drinking habits in prison, and when his intemperance is but an inchoate vice, he may continue sober on his release. But as against ingrained bad habits mere passive disuse will but diminish, not destroy.

A virtue may be lost from want of practice, but vices are more tough. The philosopher who deals in notions can give no satisfactory reasons why one set of habits should grow more readily and die more reluctantly than another set, but we have the proof in everyday experience that this is so. We have a sort of inverse ratio between the morality and the facility of our acts with their habit-forming powers. This is one of the facts of life for which mere positive psychology can give no really satisfactory answer. We have within us, if we are quite honest with ourselves, a certain ethical perversity very puzzling to the purely rational makers of mental systems. Biology is invoked to explain it by heredity, by neurasthenia, or some other morbid psychose, physiological substitutes for the original sin, the concupiscence and the *fomes* of the theologian.

By the repetition of contrary acts we may destroy a habit more effectively than by disuse, for by so doing we create an opposing habit. We set up against some vice the opposite virtue. The new habit has to struggle not merely against the old one, but against the innumerable psychic allies it has gathered together in our interior, the thoughts, emotions, principles and convictions which surge into the field of our consciousness, and strive to thrust out into psychic darkness the newly-forming virtue with all its mental allies. There is a warfare in consciousness, a central combat

between the acts called for by the old habit and the new, with outlying skirmishes of all the associated ideas. In the centre of consciousness the desire to get drunk and the will to abstain are in deadly grips, but the battle is most frequently lost or won on the flanks which stretch out very often beyond the field of mental perception. Who can analyse and enumerate all the psychic energies which make up the motive of any one deliberate act? The most obvious is not always the most effective. Your little unnoticed touch of emotion, some quaint idea hardly perceived, may easily decide this combat. The flanking ideas, volitions, and emotions fight *en masse*, and their force is proportioned to their solidarity. United they push down the opposing ideas into dimness, and obscure the dominant suggestion of the habit, but if scattered they themselves are thrust out. Our mental content has a group formation which we may dissect for purposes of argument, but which, in fact, is a block more or less. One concept or suggestion may be most prominent, but it is not all, and, like a Rupert's drop, a slight fracture may break up the whole. A change of habit will mean the substitution of one apperceptive mass for another, and this may more often take place by a conflict of the secondary elements, the associated ideas of the mass, than by the clash of primary notions. The virtue of sobriety may have, as an associated secondary, the notion of parental duty (psychologically, of course, not

ethically), and this may prove the decisive psychic factor in overcoming the craving for drink. The struggle between virtue and vice is a *mêlée*, not a duel, as it seems to the merely superficial observer. We weaken our bad habits by weakening their psychic allies ; we strengthen our good ones by increasing all kindred and friendly psychic groups. We have thus two steps in any serious self-reformation, the general extirpation of all psychic factors which favour in any way the growth of our bad habits, and the strengthening and increase of all those which promote the growth of our good habits : war against all vices and imperfections, the planting and culture of virtues in general.

Hence the work of reform is not merely specific, but general. It reaches out beyond the fault attacked to our whole psychic make-up, though it may only show itself in a limited self-mastery. We can note the weakening of the obvious vice, but it takes time and careful observation to remark the general improvement of moral effort and outlook. The necessities of the struggle have brought into our conscious store many new effective psychic elements, reasonings, memories, feelings strengthened and directed. All these remain to work in other directions when the main struggle has weakened, and to enrich and modify our consciousness. There is a cumulative psychic action alike in both virtues and vices ; each brings in extraneous elements which consciousness assimilates, and by assimilation is

modified. A man as a rule drifts into vice slowly and imperceptibly, but a reform is more sudden in consciousness, for there is the sense of stress and strife in going against the current; it contains a greater assertion of personality, of effort. It is not a slow becoming, but an active being and doing. The soul feels that it is being steered, that it is no longer drifting in a current too fast for its engines. Hence a new sense of self-realization, of power, of personality. It is the half-way house to God or Self.

It is here we encounter the problem of unification, though it has been a factor all through the struggle. The solidarity between our vices and their psychic auxiliaries, between our virtues and their allies, determines the issue. We can only successfully beat down our failings by making the opposing forces, as it were, one psychic block, for our natural perversity has cemented our vices. How many fall into drink, not from "thirst," but from good fellowship, fear of giving offence, a touch of physical depression, and a host of other moods and feelings which combine to overcome reluctance? To resist, his reason and his will must marshal another host, and make them keep step and fight *en masse*. Hence the need to link our virtues together into one vital body. This is what religion claims to do, and in doing to make us born again. It achieves this purpose by giving us a centre of union with which we may connect and relate, not one, but

all our virtues, thoughts, words, deeds, emotions, reasons, efforts, concepts, ideas, images, ideals, all that we can have, know, feel or be aware of. It gives us our psychic unity in God in the battle with all in self which is not of God. It gives the soul a constitution, an organic law.

This unification and direction of psychic life is the basic fact in all religious conversion, be it gradual or sudden, ordinary and commonplace, or extraordinary and eccentric in its manifestation. When this change of direction, this new orientation, this polarization of our phenomenal personality becomes a more or less dim fact of consciousness, we have that new initiation to religious life which is generally unlooked for. Saul went to look for his father's asses, and found a kingdom. Once the new direction is perceived in consciousness, the soul, as it were, finds itself, not as before to destruction, but to upbuilding. There is a new co-ordination of psychic elements, a new interrelationship of thoughts, volitions, and acts established. The external process seems the same, but the inner life is different. Given the occasion, this new spirit will manifest itself to the astonishment of those who thought they knew the convert's character perfectly. In its growth, the new life, by its inhibitions and its impulses, its restraints and energies, will astound the soul itself. It is something new and strange, within and yet as if from without. The psychologist may talk of the

sub-conscious elaboration and association of ideas, the convert will speak of the Holy Spirit of God.

The Catholic Church takes this new spirit as a growing organising force, and bids the convert co-operate with it, feeding him with her doctrine, and, above all, setting before him the Great Exemplar. To form new virtues, she bids him look to Her Master for his model; to strengthen and consolidate his motives, she bids him consider His Cross. She warns the convert that he may fall away, that life is progress and progress a constant struggle with self. She gives him, by her teaching, the material that he can mentally assimilate, food for the growing virtues, and psychic auxiliaries for the spiritual combat. More, she gives the convert the Sacraments.

The psychologist can only consider the latter in their effects which come into consciousness. Their real efficiency and action lie far beyond his purview, and can only be inferred from the after effects, as shown in the life of the recipient. The immediate conscious after-effects are too dependent psychologically on the recipient's mental state, on his faith and dispositions, and are too uncertain in actual sequence to justify any scientific inference as to the nature and value of the agency at work. What comes into consciousness is, as it were, but an epiphenomenon.

It is otherwise with the remote after-effects, as apparent in the lives of the recipients. Here we can

trace with regularity the progress in virtue attendant on the frequent reception of the Sacraments, and the backsliding which follows neglect. No type of spiritual experience is better established than that which shows the intimate and regular relation between the sacramental life of the Catholic and his progress, or the reverse in virtue and self-mastery. That is the reason why popular Catholic usage of the word "conversion" means frequenting the Sacraments after neglect. The agnostic psychologist and the Protestant theologian may explain this nexus of facts as they will, but they cannot deny its existence if they have given any honest study to the recorded facts of spiritual experience among Catholics. The *post hoc* is proved by the life-story of millions; we can infer the *propter hoc* inductively if we are controversialists, and experimentally if we are practical Catholics.

The preceding analysis is but a brief and sketchy outline, a mere schema, of the complex psychological process which is the ordinary type of conversion as understood by Catholics. The theory is difficult and complex, as any theory of our mental action in touch with reality necessarily is, but in practice the complexity is not apparent. The physiology of digestion has its complications, but they do not usually trouble the man who dines. Nor is the convert troubled with complexity of his psychic mechanism, or the ultimate rationale of his religious exercises. He attends the

mission, he makes his retreat, he resumes the practical life of a Catholic to whom religion is not an epiphenomenon, but a substantial element of life. If he is a Huysmans or a Rétte he may analyse for our profit his mental states as he journeyed from practical infidelity and ethical disorder to fervent faith and regular life, but the ordinary man will not trouble about his passage once it is complete. He has followed the beaten track of ordinary souls, the road surveyed and levelled in the *Spiritual Exercises.*

This little manual of the Catholic revivalist was originally intended by St. Ignatius of Loyola, as a spiritual drill-book for his company, but its use soon spread throughout the whole Catholic Church. In the hands of Canisius it became the Labarum of the Counter-Reformation, and saved Germany from being totally lost to Catholicism. Its success alarmed the Reformers to such an extent that the wildest legends were circulated as to the magical and necromantic proceedings of the Jesuits. Its use spread throughout the religious houses, from them to the pious laity, and thence in various modifications to the general body of the faithful. To-day it forms the ground-plan of every retreat given to religious or to laymen, be they scholars or simple folk, and every popular mission draws from it its inspiration, its strategy and tactics. The ordinary spiriruality of the Catholic Church to-day is the spirituality of the *Exercises,* because they are the compend-

ium and quintessence of the historic spirituality of the Church, the ascetic lore of centuries of saints and doctors, systematized by the religious genius of one who was the personification of sanctified common sense.

Many people have looked on the the *Spiritual Exercises* as being mainly an instruction in the processes of mental prayer. " The teaching of these processes is not, as has been sometimes supposed, the chief object of St. Ignatius' *Exercises.* This book is intended for a thirty days' retreat, and presupposes a man with a certain desire to be generous towards God, but kept back either by ignorance with regard to the means to be taken, or by his weakness. The *Exercises* are skilfully combined for his gradual development in generosity, and, if he is capable of it, his being led on on to heroism. This ingenious plan may escape the notice of a superficial reader ; it is only really understood by those who submit to it, even to its apparently most insignificant details. This arrangement, where everything is ordered with reference to a special object, gives its character to the book, and makes it unlike any that went before.

" With St. Ignatius, instruction in mental prayer is but a secondary object, or a means. We can imagine that a man might go through the *Exercises,* and afterwards confine himself to vocal prayer, but he would, notwithstanding this, have obtained the principal

result of his long retreat. The important point is reformation of life. The truth is that he has learnt at the same time how to pray, and that he has thus acquired a powerful means of ensuring perseverance in well doing."[1] This general view of the scope of the *Exercises* is brought out in the following analysis by Janssen in the fourth volume of his great history of the Reformation in Germany. (Book 3, chapter 1, p. 403, of the French translation).

" As the principal means of reforming our inner life, the little book begins by proposing meditative prayer which, in every age, has formed the soul of the true Christian, the religious above all. The most important subjects for meditation given to us by revelation are pointed out, at the very least, and divided up into four parts or weeks. The subjects for the first week are no other than those fundamental truths which reason, without the aid of revelation, admits and proclaims, and which form the solid base of all religion and interior life. To drive these truths home, Ignatius never trusts to vague and fleeting feelings, but relies, on the logical development of thought. Now, the starting point, like the goal of this upward march towards truth, is God. Man has been created to serve God, to be one day blest in Him, and this law of his

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[1] Poulain: *Les Graces d'Oraison* 5me ed. p. 30, note. " *The Prayer of Simplicity*," C. T. S. p. 70 note.

being should guide him in the use he makes of creatures, for if he desires to be one day united with God he must of necessity free himself from all bondage to the things of earth. On this principle, which alone gives us a reasonable and moral view of the world and of life, Ignatius builds. In his school, the Christian meditates in turn on the origin, nature, consequences, and punishment of sin, its connection with human passion, its inner and outer roots. These meditations are framed to arouse in the soul a sincere repentance, a living deep contrition, to effect a complete conversion, and in fine an entire regeneration by the worthy reception of the Sacrament of Penance.

"The second week deals with the reform of his life, the acquisition of true virtue. Ignatius, in a second sort of fundamental meditation, offers to the Christian the example of Jesus Christ, the ideal of all virtue, Who in His life gave man in a visible manner the Model he should strive to copy. The other meditations follow in a simple manner the Gospel narrative from the Incarnation to the Last Supper. Once only, as a link between the different parts of all the exercises, comes a meditation where the Spirit of Christ and His dealing with souls is brought into striking contrast with the ordinary procedure and devices of Satan.[1]

"The third week is given to meditations on the Passion; the fourth, to the mysteries of the Resur-

[1] This is the celebrated meditationon the Two Standards.

rection and the Ascension. Their aim is to strengthen more and more the resolutions which the Christian has just taken to reform his life.

"Lastly, the concluding meditation on the love of God contains, as in a central furnace, the motives most fitted to decide the soul to give itself to God, to consecrate itself without reserve to His service. Strengthened step by step in the imitation of Christ by the study of His life; resolved for love of him to wholly strip off and sacrifice self, the Christian guided by Ignatius makes joyful offering of all that he is and has; he gives all, he brings all 'for one only love, for one only grace.'"[1]

The meditative prayers which form the tactical elements of this great scheme of spiritual strategy received special treatment at the hands of St. Ignatius. He codified and organised the meditation as it existed throughout the Church, and his work in this respect marks as great an epoch in the spiritual domain as the Council of Trent does in the realm of theology. If one were writing the history of Catholic spirituality, one would date the modern period from the *Spiritual Exercises*. If we but glance at the books of devotion written before and after the *Exercises* we cannot but

[1] The special objects of the *Exercises* in each week had been thus expressed. "Deformata reformare, reformata conformare, conformata confirmare, confirmata informare." For an excellent analysis of the *Spiritual Exercises* see A. Brou's article in the *Revue de Philosophie* (special number, Mai-Juin-Juillet, 1913. p. 451).

notice a vast change in style and method. There is a new regularity, a certain formalism, a precision methodical and energetic replacing the easy going fervour, the spontaneous march and mystical tendency which we find in the ordinary types of mental prayer in pre-Reformation times. The strictly methodical form of meditation has ousted all competitors and become the common and approved form of mental prayer[1]

The Ignatian meditation is no pious reverie, no go-as-you-please reflections on sacred truths, but an ordered consideration with well-marked plan and solid internal unity. Its essence for the psychologist is the massing of psychic elements and the unification of the religious consciousness. The matter of the meditation, the distribution into points, is arranged with a view to the psychic unity of the whole. Those conscious elements which will not fit into the scheme are promptly expelled as distraction, and all extraneous thoughts are carefully checked. This may entail a certain constraint, but the very effort tends to unification, and the effective massing of all the conscious elements of value with the dispersion into oblivion of antagonistic feelings, images, volitions, and ideas. The very labour of rejecting distractions strengthens conation and increases self-control, and both imply a growing self-direction towards unity.

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1 *Cf.* Poulain *op. cit.* chap. 2 § 5 and "*The Prayer of Simplicity*," p. 89 for a general view of the history of mental prayer.

But the manner of the meditation is even more effective than the matter in the work of psychic unification. Surrounding the exercises proper, and scattered through it are a number of minor exercises, preludes, examens, prayers, all designed to secure that psychic unity which spiritual writers call recollection. There is the overnight preparation for the morning's meditation, the arrangement of the matter and the points to be taken in order. There is the general direction of the attention and intention to God, " the putting oneself in the presence of God " with brief appropriate prayers for His grace as a preparation for the exercise. As will readily be seen, this preparation is a general steadying of the whole personality, a gathering-in and massing of the psychic forces in general, the order to fall in and stand at attention.

There are two preliminary manœuvres or preludes before the meditation proper is attacked. The first, named the " composition of place," is the imaginary staging or *mise en scène* of the psychic drama to follow. The imagination constructs for itself some definite and appropriate place and scene, where either the events to be recalled in the body of the meditation may be considered as actually taking place, or to which the various considerations may be referred and related with most vividness and sense of reality. It is, in a measure, the pedagogic process of " picturing out " applied to spiritual things. This definite imaginary

localisation of the meditation gives to its unity of subject matter an added unity of place which both checks the tendency to vague reverie and dissipation of thought and aids the transformation of notional apprehensions and assents into real energetic convictions. It is the "conversio ad phantasmata" of the schoolmen used as a spiritually educative process. Until we strive to picture out our concepts, they remain vague, shadowy, notional, with but feeble energising force to affect our volitions. This insistance on the concrete is one of the dividing tendencies which mark off the *Exercises* from many of the works of pre-Reformation spirituality. In a note to his translation of B. Albertus Magnus' *De adhaerendo Deo*, Father Berthier, O.P., remarks: "One will observe the difference of this method from that which has prevailed in later times. In the thirteenth century one must strip oneself of imaginary images; in the sixteenth one must multiply images, and even display them in violent colours." Protestant spirituality could, therefore, claim continuity with that of the great age of the Catholic Church if it had not omitted what the thirteenth century deemed elementary and essential to all spirituality, the practice of asceticism.[1] The unmortified imagination, if not supplied with suitable

[1] Not to mention the liturgy. For the relations of liturgy to the pre-Ignatian types of mental prayer, etc, cf. Dom M. Festugière's remarkable article in *Revue de Philosophie* (special number referred to, p. 692, *et seq*).

images, will soon construct a series of its own, and we shall have conflicting trains of thought started, and the psychic unity disturbed. Brother Ass, when left unchastised, brays.

The second prelude is a prayer for the special result desired from the meditation, for those affective dispositions of soul which the meditation is designed to produce, in other words for the specific success of the meditation. This prelude is disposed to secure that affective unity in the meditation which will energise and mass the psychic elements produced by the consideration of the points. Without this affective unity we would but have an intellectual consideration of some religious truth with but small influence on heart or conduct, that "solitary meditation of the mind" which Cardinal Mercier has criticised so severely for its sterility in his addresses to his Seminarists, published in 1908.

The preludes finished, we come to the body of the meditation, which has been divided up into convenient sections or points. Each is considered in turn. The memory recalls into the central field of consciousness not merely the general notion involved in the point, but its psychic allies. The aim is to recall the idea or image not as a solitary unit, but as an apperceptive mass, as an energising block. All those images and concepts which tend to buttress and sustain the central point will be sought for and usefully recalled, while

those which weaken or distract will be left in obscurity, and, if they obtrude , thrust back. The task of the memory is to furnish a real object for the understanding to work on, and to do so it will not limit itself to the recall of useful cognitive elements alone, but will also bring up any useful affective associations as well. But the latter operation needs care, prudence and experience, for there is no distraction to equal a misplaced emotion.

The understanding next sets to work on these data supplied by the memory and by analysis and synthesis, by discourse as well as by direct apprehension seeks to comprehend, unify and assimilate. What the intelligence seeks in meditation is not static, but dynamic truth, not the *verum*, but the *bonum*. Herein meditation on any subject differs from a study of the same, for the aim is not to increase one's knowledge, but to augment one's love. Motives to stir the will, to move the affections will be sought through knowledge rather than mere knowledge itself, and this aim will act as a new unifying factor on the matter considered, and on the psychic elements which it generates in consciousness. The purpose and final end of the meditation being the moving of the will and affections from sin to God, from vice to virtue, the reflections of the understanding will take their direction from this dominant tendency, and so there will be a deliberate re-shaping and re-casting of the

material of thought, so as to secure the maximum of useful influence on the various volitions and affections. What is good and desirable will be presented in as vivid and active a form as possible. By reaction the affections of the will thus roused flow back on the intelligence, as it were, illuminating it by their sweetness and aiding attention and recollection. There is a mutual interplay between the affective and the cognitive elements of thought, and both combine to strengthen memory, to give the idea an enduring fixity, and to help recall. Images, emotions, concepts and volitions are fused into one apperceptive mass by the heat of meditation, and the soul gains a new source of energy, a new psychic centre of resistance to sin, a new starting-point for advance in virtue.

Each point of the meditation is dealt with in such fashion, and care is taken to elicit not merely affections of the will passively, but actively. Good feelings are desirable, but good resolutions are infinitely better. Hence the practice of the formal resolution directed against some particular failing or towards some specified virtue, which should form the coping-stone of the whole meditation. It need hardly be pointed out that the word resolution in this context means a fixed and energetic decision, not a verbal formality.

The meditation concludes with the "colloquy," an earnest and personal prayer, which derives its substance, object and character from the preceding

meditation. It serves to renew the psychic unity of the whole in the larger unity postulated in the opening prayers with which the meditation began.

At the end there is a brief recapitulation and examination of the whole exercise to note defects and any matters which may be of interest from the point of view of method for future exercises. Indeed, this self-watchfulness not only at the close, but throughout the meditation is one of the characteristics of the Ignatian method. The meditating mind has a reflex attitude throughout which marks it off as sharply from the contemplative intelligence as does its discursive process of thought. The Ignatian method considers meditation as an ordinary form of mental prayer wherein there is wide scope for personal activity and initiative. Other types of mental prayer, mystical and non-discursive, are regarded as exceptional and in a class apart, but meditation is the excercise of the ordinary mental powers in an ordinary way, with the aid of grace, of course, but such as is given ordinarily, and requiring on our part activity, good will, and self-knowledge. Hence the need and utility of constant self-watchfulness, the repeated examens which are such a feature of the *Exercises*.

We have made this lengthy analysis of the *Spiritual Exercises* because they give us in the most complete and organic form the general scheme of a Catholic revival. In practice they are much altered and

curtailed, so as to suit a brief retreat. Originally meant for a rigid retreat of a month involving seclusion and retirement from the ordinary business of life, they have been even adapted to meet the ordinary needs of a parochial mission. The whole scheme is elastic, and was intended to be so by St. Ignatius. The same may be said of the method of the meditation, which varies in different hands from the utmost simplicity to an extraordinary and often arid complexity. Its psychological analysis is very complicated, but its practice is easy enough since it has become the common form of mental prayer throughout the whole Catholic Church. What seems to us to be its fundamental psychological principle, psychic unity in the spiritual life as an aim and an energy, is also simple enough. The difficulty is not in the process or in the aim, but in seeing how the process works and the aim is attained. In practice, *solvitur meditando.*

As to the success of the *Exercises* as a revival method, let the history of the Catholic Church speak. Saint and sinner, learned and simple, men and women of every country for nearly four centuries have fallen under their spell. But the psychologist who investigates the phenomena of religious experience, like William James, passes them by. He is blind to their results, because their methods are ordinary. Quiet reforms of life, with no sub-conscious Jack-in-the-box emergences, are of little interest to the agnostic in

quest of a dissolution of the riddle of the universe. The methods of Ignatius are too normal, too natural to arouse in him the spirit of explanation.

This absence of the eccentric and the extraordinary in meditative prayer saves it from hostile criticism Religious experience of this type can only be argued from controversially in the mass, the individual ex periences merely presenting ordinary psychic features. To the outside observer they are but a series of psychoses which can be accounted for by common mental processes. They do not puzzle the agnostic psychologist like the ecstacies and intellectual visions of the mystics.

But to the Catholic, the current of whose whole life has been changed by a retreat, the experience presents features which leave no doubt in his mind that the finger of God is there. He can trace the works of the Most High not alone in a faith brightened and renewed, but in a will disposed and strengthened to resist the world, the flesh and the devil. "One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see." He knows his old weakness, he feels his new strength and he gives thanks to God. But his feelings are not scientific evidence, and so the agnostic philosopher goes on his way.

CHAPTER II

THE THEORY OF WILLIAM JAMES

We have seen how a change of psychic temperament may be brought about by a conscious process of training, as in the Spiritual Exercises, but a less widely important, yet more interesting question remains. We have to examine and, if possible, account for, those types of conversion which are not gradual and consciously elaborated in their crises, but are marked by a certain note of spontaneity and suddenness. To this category belong the more outwardly impressive conversions of Catholics from a life of sin to one of virtue, of agnostics to the Catholic faith, together with all those varied cases, which we can group together under the head of evangelical or revivalistic conversions. In all well marked types of this class we have the psychic change characterised by an element of conscious passivity so obvious to the converted man as to postulate, for him at any rate, the intervention of something not himself in his experience shaping and directing it. It is no longer an experience which is a mere product of the normal content of his consciousness, elaborated by his own psychic

activities. He feels or infers that there is something more, a new activity not himself, shaping the given of consciousness even against the grain. It is this feeling, be it a sense or an inference, of a something not himself, active, transcendant and immanent, in these cases of conversion experience which makes them of such interest to the psychologist. They suggest an apologetic or clamour for an agnostic explanation.

In a charming and wonderfully sympathetic study of the Welsh revival in 1904-5, M. Rogues de Fursac writes of the cases he examined :—

All these conversions take the form of a sudden and unexpected crisis. All happen on the road to Damascus, in the midst of a general upset of the intellectual and moral being The subject is present at the storm passively, as a spectator, or rather he bears it like a victim who feels and suffers, but who neither can nor will resist. The force which decides the conversion seems a stranger to the individual, and to act unexpectedly without any participation of his will ; hence this appearance of the marvellous and the supernatural presented by the phenomenon and the unshakeable faith of believers in the action of a Higher Power.[1]

A little further on he adds, having stated the theological explanation :—

I fancy this theory was much stronger formerly than to-day, and more embarassing for the older psychology than for the modern. Indeed, when one considered solely

[1] De Fursac : *Un Mouvement Mystique Contemporain.* Le, Réveil Réligieux du Pays de Galles (1904-1905). Paris, Alcan 1907, p. 66.

those natural factors directly observable, when one knew psychic life only in its conscious manifestation, the problem of conversion must seem insoluble. But to-day we have a glimpse behind consciousness at the vast territory of the unconscious, or rather of the sub-conscious, and things have changed their aspect, and many obscure matters have come into the light. We begin to bring into the domain of natural law those phenomena where mystical[1] explanations had their loudest triumphs, and to restore to psychology a region unjustly held by theology. We can see the day approach when we will no more need Grace to explain a conversion than Jupiter to account for thunder.

We know that below the superficial and evident work of conscious life another work takes place closely linked to the former, far more energetic, although inaccessible to introspection and capable of progress in silence during a long period. A day comes, however, when the changes it effects in the personality[1] manifest themselves in a sudden, explosive fashion, without betraying their origin, and leaving the subject under the illusion that they are the result of forces foreign to his own self.

Phenomena of this order were first detected in mental pathology. Everyone knows that a vast number of hysterical phenomena are but the result of morbid sub-conscious action. But sub-conscious activity extends far beyond hysteric and mental pathology. Its influence is traceable at every moment in normal psychic life, and it is overwhelming in the religious life.

De Fursac proceeds to apply this theory. He takes

[1] Like most " profane " writers De Fursac uses the word *mystical* in a wide sense as a sort of synonym for *religious* in its subjective meaning. The abuse of the term *personality* is universal.

the case of the sudden conversion during the revival of a brutal, drunken and godless collier, who was rebuked by one of his comrades for blasphemy. The rebuke and the prayers of his comrade made him a changed man, and that with astounding suddenness. To explain away the "miracle" De Fursac argues that the elements of race, surroundings and upbringing *plus* the work of the sub-consciousness are sufficient to explain the sudden change. The man was a Welshman, and, therefore, racially a "mystical" type. He was brought up on the Bible, and so had a store of religious elements in his sub-consciousness. This circumambient revival grouped and energised these elements, and the comrade's rebuke was but the match to the powder. If De Fursac had ever made the Spiritual Exercises he would have said that the ruffian's sub-conscious self had made a good retreat.

Later on (p. 73) he applies the same theory to Catholic conversions. They are the product of early religious impressions working themselves out through the sub-conscious. Indeed, he takes a very optimistic view of the permanence of these early impressions, provided they are not killed off by a little Voltaireanism. We have thus a theory, derived from Myers' "subliminal self" through William James, to account for the psychic process of these unusual forms of conversion. We might baptise the theory if we could assume that the sub-conscious is capable of making an

Ignatian meditation and projecting the resolution into the field of consciousness. Does this seem too far-fetched? The wondrous powers which James and others have attributed to the sub-conscious ought to be equal to such a moderate task. However that may be, the unbaptised theory is frankly agnostic, with, in James' hands, a faint suggestion of pantheistic possibilities. Seeing it holds the field as a naturalistic explanation of religious experiences both normal and mystical, we will be justified in a somewhat detailed examination.

This theory of the sub-conscious may be conveniently summed up in three propositions:

(1) There exist fields of consciousness and variations in these fields: hence the origin of the sub-conscious.

(2) There is a tendency in psychological elements thus withdrawn from clear consciousness to organise themselves in a new synthesis, which, in certain exceptional circumstances, can constitute a secondary personality fully prepared in the shadow to burst into the light: hence the formation of the sub-conscious self.

(3) In the cases mentioned there is an irruption sudden or gradual of these elements into clear consciousness: hence the relations of the sub-conscious with the normal consciousness.[1]

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[1] Michelet: *Dieu et l'Agnosticisme Contemporain* Paris Lecoffre, 1909, p. 115.

But before proceeding to examine the question of the sub-conscious it will be well to clarify, if possible, our notions of consciousness proper.

In any state of ours to which we apply the term conscious we find three features of varying intensity. There is, as a ground-work, some vital activity to which is added our awareness and some sense of proprietorship. A toothache is our vital reaction to a certain nerve irritation of which we become acutely aware as very disagreeable, and further we are experimentally convinced that it is ours and nobody else's. Reaction, pain, ownership, the three are interrelated but with a certain independence. Pascal, they say, could stop a toothache by concentrating his mind on a mathematical problem. By a diversion of attention, by a disappropriation, he got rid of the third factor and with it the second, but there is no reason to think the first ceased. Had he worried about it by reflection on his discomfort, he would have augmented the pain element, while the *fons et origo mali* remained unaffected.

The sense of ownership and all that it entails is a product of divided attention. We are interested both in the psychic change in itself and in the psychic change as specifically ours. Where it is caused by some object which arouses our interest but does not markedly affect our sensibility, the bulk of our energy of attention will go out to the object, and we will

hardly be aware of ourselves as the subject. If our interest is a pained one, or unduly pleasant, much of our attention is switched off to ourselves. When as psychologists we study our sensations or reflect on our mental processes, we voluntarily divert some of our energy of attention from the psychic object to the percipient subject, making it thereby a secondary object. Such a diversion of vital energy entails a lowering of tension in the original psychic act. It even inhibits it at times, as may be seen in the case of stage-fright. On the other hand, by lowering the tension of reflection, we set free a larger share of vital energy to augment the original activity and our direct perception. People affected with scruples who are for ever examining their acts are notoriously slow and inefficient, for they divert to reflection that store of vital energy which should go to action. The man of action, on the contrary, can do things, but can rarely tell us how he does them, for his supply of vital energy has been devoted almost exclusively to direct psychic action and but a small fraction to reflection.

These three factors, therefore, vary greatly in every state of consciousness. In a fit of scruples we have the third at its maximum, we find it at its natural minimum (morbid cases apart) in the utter absorption of the artist and man of genius. Their psychic action at its culmination is so direct as to render them unconscious of their surroundings and oblivious of themselves. Archimedes is a classic instance.

Quite apart from this bifurcation, attention plays a great part in determining the character of any conscious state. In itself at any fixed moment our consciousness is a very complex entity. It embraces not only the totality of our impressions from the outer world at that moment, but all our internal sensations, all our cognitive and volitional derivatives from both these sources with all their innumerable associated ideas and impressions to hand in our memories. It is but a fragment of the whole of which we are formally aware, that small part of the whole field on which we fix our attention. We cast a selective glance over the psychic landscape and pick out those objects in which we are interested for more complete inspection. The others are unobserved unless our attention shifts its direction, and thus we have the sub-conscious. As with our eyes in natural vision, our psychic sight has a point of maximum efficiency, the centre of attention, and a certain field of view. Within that field our consciousness is fairly clear and sharply defined, but its definiteness decreases as the field extends. Outside that field, which is limited, we have the vast expanse of the sub-conscious. Shift the centre of attention, the field changes, and the sub conscious emerges into clear consciousness.

Our inner vision, too, like our bodily eye, has its blind spot. The well-known name which we cannot recall to mind by any effort, and which springs into

consciousness the moment our attention shifts from the point at issue, the solution of some problem which stares us in the face and which we cannot see, are familiar cases which bear out this analogy,

Our mental eye, too, varies in its focus. We cannot justly represent our field of consciousness merely as a surface, it has depth as well. When we isolate some psychic element and focus our attention on it, we have in the centre of our consciousness some cognition or volition whose activity we can increase or decrease and whose character we can alter by a psychic act analogous to the alteration of focus in distant and nearer vision. We can get a deeper insight, a more intense appetition, a psychic depth. We can see the universal in the particular, the norm in the act.

Our attention gives a psychic unity to this field of clear consciousness. We see it as one and as ours. Psychically it is a unity of appropriation. When its content is shunted into oblivion and afterwards recalled, we have often a difficulty in recognising it as ours. "Can I possibly have said or done such a thing?" Doubt is a very common phenomenon in that psychical operation so well known to Catholics as the examen of conscience. We fail to recognise certain features of the field as ours, for oblivion has expropriated attention. In certain morbid states of attention, certain types of hysteria for example, we have successive and independent appropriations

so individually consistent, yet so separate as to seem to be the work of different persons. Normally our fields of consciousness merge into one another like pictures on the kinematograph, but disease or abnormal conditions may cause a break in the film with the loss of that sense of unity in proprietorship which is commonly but improperly called personality. The agnostic psychologist will insist that there has been a change of operators in our psychic Picture Houses, it is their Jupiter to explain the thunder. Even in these secondary states, as De la Vaissière well points out,[1] the psychologist can trace continuity between these states, and he quotes Janet as stating with reference to the numerous cases studied by that eminent psychiatrist, "that they were destitute of genius; their unconscious phenomena were of a very simple character and formed part of the normal consciousness of other men without exciting notice. The cases had lost free control and personal knowledge of these phenomena; they had in this respect a malady of the personality, and that is all." De la Vaissière concludes that these dissociated states of consciousness should be regarded "as subsidiary rather than as secondary personalities; momentarily dissociated from the main system, they do not cease to be dependent on it,

[1] J. de la Vaissière: *Eléments de Psychologie Experimentale*. Paris, Beauchesne, p. 261.

and a pschological revulsion can restore them to their original centre."

We will find some examples of the dissociation of a field of consciousness in those unpleasing spiritual experiences familiar to Catholics as distractions in prayer. "We should know, however," says the Angelic Doctor, "that the attention which can be given to vocal prayer is three fold; firstly, attention to the words lest any mistake in them be made; secondly, attention to the meaning of the words; and thirdly, attention to the end of the prayer, namely to God, and to the matter for which we pray, and this is of the utmost importance, and is within the capacity even of those of weak intelligence; and at times this intention, which lifts the mind to God, so prevails that the mind forgets all things else."[1] Where extempore prayer is the custom, as with those Protestants who eschew all set forms of prayer as undevotional and formalistic, the mind of him who prays cannot well wander on the first two points. If he prays at all he must attend to the words he utters and to their meaning. But if he is lukewarm or hypocritical, his mind may not be fixed on the third and most important point, and the blame of Isaias xxix.13 may well be his portion. Hypocrites apart, a general all-round attention is easier when the prayer is extempore, and doubtless this is the reason why

1 *Summa Theologica* IIa. IIae. Q. 83, art. 8, c.

so many religious men among Protestants shrink from set forms which seem to them mechanical and undevout With those who use liturgical forms of prayer the mind can readily wander on all three points. This possibility of distraction is still more marked where the set forms are very brief, easily memorised and frequently repeated. Hence the scandal of the Rosary to the average Protestant, to whom it appears little different from the Buddhist prayer-wheel. To the Catholic the repetition is not repulsive, for to him the essential matter is the attention to God, the rest, in a measure, is subsidiary. The repeated petitions enable him to keep his outer self usefully employed, his middle self is busied with reflections on the life and sufferings of his Savour suggested by the various Mysteries, and his inmost self in the apex of mind and will cling to God. We have thus a complete prayer of the whole man when we get the grace to say the Rosary well. Human nature, however, is weak and fallen, the outer self gabbles and slurs, the middle self wanders off to business, and the inmost sleeps too often. Even when the mind is upright at its apex, the imagination may be disturbed. This is very observable when the attention to God is great. Our triple self has only one fund of vital energy to dispose of, and excess in one direction must be compensated in the others. Hence the oblivion of which St. Thomas speaks in the passage cited, and in such

cases we may observe an increased difficulty in reciting the vocal prayers, less mobility and regularity in our reflections, an incapacity somewhat corresponding to what mystics call the "ligature." We become aware that our field of consciousness is breaking up, that we are losing control over certain psychic elements which it includes. The repetition of the prayers becomes more automatic and the reflections and images either cease or grow slightly anarchic. We feel our consciousness divided, as it were, into quasi-autonomous fields yet within central control. At times, however, the imagination grows flatly rebellious, a stream of more or less connected and associated images flickers through like a kinomatograph gone mad, or a disordered dream. It becomes, as it were, something not ourselves, of which we are mere spectators. But for the central control we would assist at the conscious formation of a subsidiary personality within a larger phenomenal self.

We have taken as an illustration of the fissiparous tendency of certain states of consciousness a perhaps unusual type of religious experience, but we see it also where the distractions are less accentuated. By attention we may secure a certain unity of consciousness, but we are aware of that other "law in my members fighting against the law of my mind" (Romans vii. 23). In certain types of prayer the conflict is extreme. "Everybody is not so distressed,

and assaulted by these weaknesses as violently as I have been for many years, on account of my wretchedness, so that it seems as if I were trying to take vengeance on myself. . . . . The thing is inevitable, therefore do not let it disturb or distress you, but let the mill clack on while we grind our wheat; that is, let us continue to work with our will and intellect."[1] Elsewhere, St. Teresa writes: "Sometimes I laugh at myself and recognise my wretchedness: I watch my understanding, and leave it alone to see what it will do. Glory be to God, for a wonder, it never runs on what is wrong, but only on indifferent things considering what is going on here, or there, or elsewhere. I see then, more and more, the exceeding great mercy of Our Lord to me, when he keeps this lunatic bound in the chains of perfect contemplation."[2] The psychic element which we have referred to as "depth" would seem to have a large part in these schisms of consciousness, for they are most marked when the area of the field of consciousness reckoned in distinct psychic elements (ideas, images, etc.) is least, that is to say, in the more unitive and least discursive types of prayer. When we try to read a poster on the far side of the street, we are apt to find the usual traffic a visual nuisance; we have chaos when we try to read and look out for a friend at the same time.

[1] St. Teresa: *The Interior Castle*, iv., chap. 1, § 12.
[2] St. Teresa; *Life* chap. xxx., paragraph 10.

In the very brightest areas of clear consciousness there is much which remains unobserved. How much hidden self-love underlies the most altruistic aspirations. "It is amusing to see souls, who, while they are at prayer, fancy they are willing to be despised and publicly insulted for the love of God, yet afterwards do all they can to hide their small defects; if anyone unjustly accuses them of a fault, God deliver us from their outcries!"[1] Self-knowledge is confessedly rare, and what is it but the perception and evaluation of our consciousness in its totality? We introspect, but we only see what we want to see. What is understanding but a deepened vision, a seeing of the essential in the clear particular instance, a diving into the depths? We find *what* is there. The psychic elements in our field are grouped and associated to all seeming fortuitously, we look and see the links before invisible. We perceive the congruity beneath the contiguity in our associations. Even in our sensations there is more felt than we feel. A musician hears a chord as a unity, but he can make it a multiplicity by listening. There are fringes and edges to our feelings to which we hardly ever attend. A man is irritated by a bore and by dyspepsia, he gives all the blame to the bore. If we are patient we may see and appreciate what comes within the area of our psychic search-light, but if we are in a hurry we can

[1] St. Teresa: *The Interior Castle*, v., chap. 3, § 10.

only see the surface of the obvious; the rest is there as well, but we miss it. What does the extroverted man know of himself? His consciousness is but a stream of sensations analysed by rule of thumb.

Yet, however we may introvert ourselves, however patiently we may peer into our consciousness, there is much which is unobserved because it is unobservable. We cannot hear musical notes above a certain pitch, or see colours beyond the ultra-red or ultra-violet. Touch, smell and taste may be too feebly stimulated to provoke attention, or specified beyond our powers of sense discrimination. Have all these unfelt stimuli no repercussion in consciousness? The invisible rays of light can burn or disinfect, our vitality transforms them by a change of potential. May not other translimenal impressions be transformed as well? Nutrition and digestion when normal are unfelt, but we know only too well how our psychic states are affected by them when in disorder. How far did an excess of uric acid affect Bossuet's views on Quietism? It may well prove the key to certain eccentricities. If the normally unfelt in what is our proper bestiality, to use the telling phrase of B. Albertus Magnus, can so devastate our higher feelings, may not these psychically higher impressions have their value in colouring and modifying our fields of consciousness?

If we admit the modification of consciousness by translimenal sense impressions, can we reasonably

deny the possibility of analogous modifications by psychic elements which transcend the apprehension of our highest conscious energies? Our intelligence and will may as well have their ultra-violet as our bodily eyes. We know there are ideas beyond our grasp, aspirations beyond the capacity of our wills. There are ideals in every man dragging at his heart and spurring on his wits. Who is content to be what he is here and now? The idea of happiness, of ultimate satisfaction, whatever shape it takes, is ever something to be achieved. It is the expression of a Need as well as a Purpose. It is the shadow of something beyond ourselves transformed to the level of our consciousness, yet retaining that sense of Beyond in whatever ideal shape it assumes. This feeling of the desirable in the unattainable is the tragic craving which has forced mankind in every age to prayer. "Thou awakest us to delight in Thy praise: for thou madest us for Thyself, and our heart is restless, until it repose in Thee. Grant me, Lord, to know and understand which is first, to call on Thee or to praise Thee? And again, to know Thee or to call on Thee? For who can call on Thee not knowing Thee? For he that knoweth Thee not, may call on Thee as other than Thou art. Or, is it rather, that we call on Thee that we may know Thee? But how shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? Or how shall they believe without a preacher?"[1]

[1] *The Confessions of St. Augustine*, Bk. I., chap. I., par. I

Man seeks the Beyond of consciousness in prayer and spiritual experience, he finds the Beyond of action. It may be difficult to demonstrate the reality of a merely psychic experience, but conduct is a matter of human evidence. If the virtues of a Saint are extraordinary, if his actions stand out like the Alps from the plain of common morality, may we not reasonably suspect a more than human source of energy in his consciousness? If we find a whole race of such, men and women and children, of every age and clime, of every temperament and physique, of every social class, bond and free, rich and poor, wise and unlearned, may we not further infer that this terrific moral energy is no temperamental freak, no sport of nature? It is sufficiently common to be a human possiblity, it is sufficiently rare to be a personal privilege; it has as a universal concomitant the spirit of prayer. If such religious experience be but the projective development of a primal human need elaborated in the sub-concious, how comes it that Saints are so scarce?

To this unconscious psychic factor or factors in Catholic religious experience the name of Grace has been given since the days of St. Paul. The theologian demonstrates its existence by the rules of his science, the practical Catholic infers it, as Adams and Leverrier inferred the existence and position of the planet Neptune, from the observed disturbances in the other psychic elements in his field of consciousness.

Grace in itself is not a fact of psychical experience "man knoweth not whether he is worthy of love or hatred" (Eccle. ix.i), but when the man of prayer feels within his conscious self "a stream of tendencies not himself, which makes for righteousness," when he finds obstinate passions stilled and selfish motives rectified, when he perceives a new strength in old weakness, a new Power to do and to suffer, old hates and jealousies transformed, he would need an infernal impudence to credit the moral miracle to himself. Illusion of the subconscious? A fair retort, perhaps, to the very ordinary Christian, but what of the long line of Saints? Was Pagan Rome turned inside out by a crowd of degenerates? Celsus would doubtless agree with M. de Fursac, but there are limits to the credulity of the ordinary Christian who will only render to Science the things that are Science's.

If we look on the sub-consciousness as a reservoir of all those psychic elements which lie outside the field of clear consciousness, it bears a certain resemblance to the old-fashioned faculty of memory, regarded not as a power of reproducing past states but as a storehouse or safe-deposit vault. Memory in its ordinary sense, the surface memory, would be as the till in our shop with its supply of ready change; the deeper memory would correspond with the safe where the unwanted valuables are locked up. The surface memory is practically a back slice of consciousness,

for we can bring up its content for the asking. But there is much that we forget, psychic elements which defy our will to recall. Have these ceased to be? Are they in the safe, and have we but lost the key? Experience would seem to show that nothing is ever finally forgotten, even most faint and delicate sensations. N. in his childhood acquired a great dislike for cognac, because it was used to mask the flavour of castor oil, when that domestic drug had to be exhibited. He grew up to years of manhood and indiscretion and the "*fine champagne*" of many a restaurant dinner had wiped out from his consciousness the unlovely association of flavours. Dining one night, however, he took for his "*petit verre*" an excellent cognac whose name he remembered from his childhood's days; and instanter, there was the castor oil! The interval must have been at least a quarter of a century, yet the specific aroma which differentiated this brand from all others sufficed to recall the association. It was but a passing impression, though very vivid, and did not outlast the "*petit verre.*" There are two points to be noted in this little experience (1) the memory even of a sensation is more psychic than physiological, for in twenty-five years how often has the body been renewed? and (2) a very faint stimulus, if sudden, is sufficient to recall with great vigour a forgotten association. The energy of the recall is not proportional to the vigour of the stimulus even in pure sensations.

It is not alone the once clear elements of consciousness which pass into this mental safe and are lost for a time, but the unnoticed elements, the face our eyes saw in the crowd but our minds missed. How many very puzzling associations we could account for, if we could only recall our past states as a whole, and not merely the clearly conscious parts of them.

The sub-consciousness, according to the Gospel of James, is something more than a mere safe-deposit or reservoir. The psychic elements are not only stored but handled as well, sorted, combined, re-arranged and reinforced. It is a brewer's vat or a workshop according as we incline towards or away from the possibilities of transcendent action. Our sub-conscious psychic elements may ferment of themselves into some new product, or they may be worked up by our sublimenal self or by some transcendent agency of which our sub-consciousness is but an out-crop.

If our clear consciousness was but a pile of nervous states casually illuminated, if physiological modifications constituted its essence, and psychic awareness were only an epiphenomenal flourish, a sort of luxurious accident, then doubtless we would find no difficulty in the unconscious cerebration of Carpenter. It would explain elaboration in sub-consciousness as a physiological process like digestion or nutrition, and so account for its non-perception until the final touch is applied and the light switched on. If the mind of man is but a

pure mechanism of nerves and his consciousness but a distant spectator, we solve the question of the unconscious, but not the real problem of elaboration. We must refuse to recognise the element of value as different in the various recorded phenomena and place sanctity and crime, genius and hysteria on the same level of being. Was it a mere transposition of nerve elements which determines whether Saul shall exterminate the first Christians or become the Apostle of the Gentiles, whether Francis shall become a man of fashion in Assisi or the Poverello of the Fioretti, whether another Francis shall become a worldly prelate or the Apostle of the Indies? What a demand on our credulity!

But may we not accept the automatic combination of psychic elements in the sub-consciousness apart from this physiological theory? We see how our fields of clear consciousness are built up and modified, how the various elements, when brought into mental juxtaposition, attract or repel one another. Can we not assume a similar process in the subconscious? These psychic elements are forms of our vital energy; can they not unite below, as well as above, the threshold of consciousness? Such automatic combination would explain most of the difficulties, but will it work? Do our ideas combine of themselves even in consciousness, or is not our consciousness itself both solder and soldering iron? If there is an inherent capacity of

combination in our psychic elements, how comes it that their fusion is more difficult in one person than in another? How account for varying convictions in persons belonging to the same social group? What is the task of the teacher but to enable the pupil to group and classify his psychic elements, and would it not be lightened if this theory held good? And if the process continued in the sub-consciousness, need he sweat to secure attention and conscious effort? Why, oblivion would become an educational process! One demonstration of a proposition in Euclid, and the rest left to the sub-consciousness!

Clearly if we are to insist on elaboration in the sub-consciousness we must posit some agency other than the psychic elements considered in themselves. We must, with Myers, look to the sublimenal self as the demiurge of this secret world. Are we permanently duplicated, with another self hanging on to our phenomenal self like a psychic Siamese twin, sleeping perhaps most of the time, but clapper-clawing our conciousness when awake? A second mind working in the dark and throwing out stray suggestions, yet so hidden that we have only sporadic evidence from which to infer its existence. We may account for the vast bulk of automatic writings and other mediumistic phenomena of the psychic order on this hypothesis, but we may do so just as satisfactorily by the assumption that the normal stream of consciousness in the

subject has divided, as we saw when we considered the question of distractions in prayer, and that each branch is capable of independent self-expression. The hand of the automatic writer may be controlled by one branch and his tongue by the other, thus supplying a double expression of thought and feeling which leads the observer to infer a second personality at work. The inferior mentality of the products of these secondary personalities shows that they are fragments of the normal consciousness, not the work of a whole and independent consciousness. They are, as it were, the overtones of the normal psychic note. It is the general rule that these secondary personalities are inferior and fragmentary as compared to the normal self,[1] and the law of parsimony, *entia non multiplicanda praeter necessitatem,* forbids our using the hypothesis of a sublimenal self to explain what may be accounted for by a disaggregation of normal consciousness, some species of psychic ataxia, an acute distraction with an automatic obligato. Generally, too, the state of the subject borders on the morbid in these mediumistic type of experiences. This general rule of inferiority has, however, some startling recorded exceptions where the secondary personality has displayed remarkable powers far beyond, to all seeming, the capacities of the normal subject. In these cases of " occult " and supranormal phenomena

[1] Cf. De la Vaissière, loc. cit. supra.

the theory of division of normal consciousness is out of action, if the facts are admitted, but will that of the sublimenal self work? Only if we posit, with Myers and James, either a supranormal efficiency in our psychic twin either as a native endowment or through his being *en rapport* with some higher consciousness. If our sublimenal self has such native ability, he must either be extraordinarily modest or excessively fastidious to keep himself so hidden throughout our manifold psychic experiences and only consent to reveal himself in general as an imbecile. The alternative is more thinkable, but does it substantially differ from the theories of "possession" and "obsession" by discarnate intelligences so familiar in the writings of both occultists and mystics and so ridiculed by the "profane"? If the really remarkable phenomena come from the sublimenal self through its contact with a higher intelligence, the sublimenal self would seem to be a superfluous entity. Unless, of course, the sublimenal self and the higher intelligence are *one and the same.* If Science, with a capital S, will not have Aquinas it can fall back on Averroes.

We have no reason as psychologists to identify the sublimenal self with any higher consciousness of a cosmic character, and very many sound metaphysical and ethical reasons why we should not. But may we admit the possible inference of a higher type of consciousness than given in our experience as a regulative

and organising power, or the reverse, as regards the contents of our sub-conscious reservoir? Such a theory would explain the facts, and may indeed be necessary to account for certain mystical phenomena.[1] Grace may, in certain cases, organise and reinforce the psychic elements stored away in our deeper memory, combine them, and, if need be, create new psychic elements, bringing the finished psychic product up into clear consciousness at the appointed time. But the road to Damascus is not the ordinary way, and the theologians tell us grace follows nature. Let us see if we can dispense with elaboration *in the sub-consciousness* as well as with the sublimenal self. Is it absolutely necessary to postulate these constructions in the background to account for the startling changes shown in these types of conversion experience? Cannot we dispense with these "carpenter's scenes" in our internal drama?

The disparity of stimulus and reaction in these cases, the workmen converted by a comrade's rebuke, by the words of a hymn half heard when passing a chapel, seems too excessive. We must either admit the miraculous or invoke prior sub-conscious elaboration, and regard the stimulus as the mere match to the powder already prepared and placed in position. Before we

1 Maine de Biran first put forward the theory of the sub-consciousness being the vehicle of Divine grace in mystical experience. Cf. Sharpe: *Mysticism its true nature and value*. London, Sands, p. 115.

choose either alternative, are we not entitled to ask whether this disparity really exists from the psychological point of view? How can A estimate the precise amount and quality of the stimulus sufficient to revolutionise a given state of consciousness in B, or for that matter in A himself? Do we really know how stable or unstable is any given state of consciousness? We fail to smash a Rupert's drop with a hammer, but it flies into dust when we nip off its tail. We have seen in our study of the method of the Spiritual Exercises that the correction of one element in our moral make-up entails a modification of the whole more or less. In the Exercises such a correction is achieved by a conscious effort, by attacking the vice and its psychic auxiliaries both directly and by the introduction of the opposite virtue with its allies. If we had such perfect self-knowledge that we could detect in the anatomy of our faults their solar plexus one blow might well suffice to knock out the old Adam, or at any rate "put him to sleep" for a comfortable interval. But we know ourselves very imperfectly, and so the fight to a finish is usually a process of exhaustion. Occasionally, as in these more remarkable cases of conversion, the "point" is reached in the scuffle as it were by chance, and the world is amazed at the sudden collapse of an erstwhile triumphant bully reputed invincible.

Unless we deny *á priori* the possible existence of

such potential centres of instability in consciousness, we have no right to infer either miracle or sub-conscious elaboration from disparity between stimulus and reaction. In a very large number of degenerative psychoses we find very clear indications of the existence of these centres of instability. The reformed drunkard, who has with much toil built up a temperate consciousness, the unchaste man who has disciplined his bestiality, how often do these fall victims to some trivial temptation? "Et ne nos inducas in tentationem." "Vigilate et orate ut non intretis in tentationem. Spiritus quidem promptus est, caro autem infirma" (Matt. xxvi., 42). The constant tradition of Christian asceticism has recognised the appalling power of some trivial occasion to cause man's moral downfall. The warnings of Cassian, of St. Augustine, of countless other spiritual writers in every age seem full of morbidity to the modern whose anxiety to avoid sin is not so "excessive." Whether we recognise their moral code or not, we may not lightly challenge the psychological accuracy of their observations. Even those who have reduced asceticism to abstention from alcohol will admit the doctrine in their own pet particular instance. If the existence of centres of instability in consciousness will account psychologically for perversion, why not for conversion as well? If a prior vice inhibited by an acquired virtue can be actively re-created by some trivial stimulus, to the

temporary or permanent destruction of the virtue, may not a vice which stifles original good qualities be shattered by a kindred psychological process? The process may be of more rare occurrence, but positive science cannot reject the hypothesis without glaring apriorism.

It may be urged that this theory will only account for the restoration of the psychic *status quo ante*, whereas the observed changes for good or ill are often much greater than this. But what is restored is only an element, however energetic, of consciousness. The phenomenal self, when it is resurrected, is not quite the same conscious self in which it formerly lived. There are new possibilities of grouping in the field of consciousness, new elements for the renascent ideas and affections to unite with or antagonise. Add to this all the psychic allies of the renascent habit entering the field along with it and we have material for widespread psychic disturbances. Although the restored habit, *qua* habit, may be old, its actualization in consciousness is a new factor, and as such very energetic.

Novelty in consciousness is a highly dynamic factor as regards the second and third fundamental characteristics of consciousness, our awareness and sense of proprietorship. An absolutely uniform sensation will cease after a brief period to attract our attention. We do not feel the pressure of the atmosphere. The

stuffiness of a class-room is unnoticed until the teacher has occasion to go out. What Londoner hears the roar of the city? The miller can sleep through the clatter of his mill, but awakes when it stops. We need some degree of change to ring up our attention, to keep it fixed when aroused. Once the sensation becomes uniform it quietly drops out of consciousness and we attend to something else. Even a steady pain may be forgotten, and pain is never quite a uniform nerve stimulation. Emotions fluctuate like pain, but the closer they approximate to a steady state the less are they noticed. Monotony in ideas causes oblivion or boredom as we slacken or force our attention. Only supreme interest can hold the solitary idea at the focal point of consciousness even for a brief period. Nature reacts by sleep or trance should we endeavour to arrest our stream of conscious states and induce a psychic monotony. Worry is sleep's greatest enemy, and what is worry but a painful oscillation of conscious states, a rapid series of sharp psychic changes, an ever nascent set of ideas painful in tone. The train of thought as a whole may be familiar even to weariness, but each element comes into consciousness brusquely with the novelty of a jerk, hauling its successor like a wheelbarrow over cobblestones. The main trend of the stream holds our sense of proprietorship by its painful general interest, and the individual items by their quick changes keep our general sense of aware-

ness alert and attentive. If we can silence our pained self-interest or slow the stream, we may get to sleep; but we are in for a sleepless night if we fail.

It is only the exceptional mind which can sustain its interest when novelty has passed. The new psychic element, on its first entry into our field of consciousness holds our attention with a sort of automatic interest, be it like or dislike. When our first curiosity is satisfied, the curiosity of mere recognition, there is a drop in automatic attention. If the new element has much intrinsic interest we may have a large development of spontaneous attention, friendly or hostile. Whether this is greater or less as a conscious phenomenon will depend on the new idea's accord or disaccord with the field into which it floats, and its powers of combining with or disintegrating the field. When this interest is exhausted and the new idea finds its psychic level, our spontaneous attention drops and gives place to conative attention, should we desire to consider it further, whether it has settled down as part of the general field or remains recalcitrant. The critical point in the psychic life of the new element is the trasit from being the object of automatic attention to becoming that of spontaneous attention, that is, in the first *psychic* recognition. The new element, like the field into which it comes, is a complex which our attention may afterwards analyse into concepts, volitions, images, emotions, sensations, with possibly

many other constituents which escape analysis, and this recognition is not its logical or philosophical classification, but the sense of its congruity or the opposite with the general field. It corresponds with what ascetical writers and moral theologians call the first movements of sensuality or temptation, or the first movements of grace according to what happens to be the moral value of the new element. With this psychic recognition the new stage begins, that of acceptance in, or rejection from, the field of consciousness. This is the period of storm and stress, of temptation proper, of vivid spontaneous interest ending with acceptance or rejection ; the newcomer is absorbed or driven out. If the new element is quite congruous with the field, the transition from recognition to absorption will take place without a jar and the general consciousness will be undisturbed. Should the incongruity be marked the casting out will be similar. But when the new element is both congruous and opposed, then, be it finally absorbed or rejected, there is strife within ourselves, attraction and repulsion of the nascent idea or psychic element by the various elements already in consciousness which accord or disaccord with it. Until our spontaneous attention can rally our conative attention, the interaction of nascent idea and field is practically unchecked. We are for the nonce victims of psychic determinism. Hence the extreme importance of this initial stage.

To state this rather arid and abstract argument in a concrete parable, the incoming psychic element is like the suffragette of old who suddenly interrupts a public meeting. There is an amazed pause, then recognition of the disturber, and then the meeting proceeds to disturb itself with cries for order from the Antis and cheers from the Pros. The original interruption was but a feeble shout, the meeting itself does the rest, and unless the stewards and police succeed in ejecting the disturber the assembly breaks up in confusion. If the crowd were composed of calm philosophers would a solitary voice bring chaos ? If the interruption were expected it would be suppressed without confusion. It is the unexpected, the novelty, which is dynamic.

When the new idea shouts its warcry to the crowd within it sets the constituent elements of consciousness by the ears. We can by an effort alter the focus of our attention, bring new elements into action, and expel or absorb the incoming notion. But if we fail to make an effort or relax it when made, we are dominated by the conflict of our own psychic elements, we have ceased to rule ourselves. For good or ill the newcomer modifies our consciousness temporarily or perchance permanently

" Then he (Alypius) was carried away incredibly with an incredible eagerness after the shows of gladiators. For being utterly averse to and detesting such

spectacles, he was one day by chance met by divers of his acquaintance and fellow-students coming from dinner, and they with a familiar violence haled him, vehemently refusing and resisting, into the Amphitheatre, during these cruel and deadly shows, he thus protesting : ' Though you hale my body to that place, and there set me, can you force me also to turn my mind or my eyes to those shows ? I shall then be absent while present, and so shall overcome both you and them.' They hearing this, led him on nevertheless, desirous perchance to try that very thing, whether he could do as he said. When they were come thither, and had taken their places as they could, the whole place kindled with that savage pastime. But he, closing the passages of his eyes, forbade his mind to range abroad after such evils ; and would he had stopped his ears also ! For in the fight, when one fell, a mighty cry of the whole people striking him strongly, overcome by curiosity, and as if prepared to despise and be superior to it whatsoever it were, even when seen, he opened his eyes, and was stricken with a deeper wound in his soul than the other, whom he desired to behold, was in his body ; and he fell more miserably than he, upon whose fall that mighty noise was raised, which entered through his ears and unlocked his eyes, to make way for the striking and beating down of a soul, bold rather than resolute, and the weaker, in that it had presumed on itself,

which ought to have relied upon Thee. For so soon as he saw that blood, he therewith drunk down savageness, nor turned away, but fixed his eye, drinking in phrenzy, unawares, and was delighted with that guilty fight, and intoxicated with the bloody pastime. Nor was he now the man he came, but one of the throng he came unto, yea, a true associate of theirs that brought him thither. Why say more? He beheld, shouted, kindled, carried thence with him the madness which should goad him to return not only with them who first drew him thither, but also before them, yea, and to draw in others."[1]

"Vigilate et orate ne intretis in tentationem." We can give the counsel a psychological exegesis. Vigilate: bring the new element under conative attention from the first glimmer of interest lest it rule your consciousness to your loss; orate: if it be hostile, call up to battle against it all the resources of your deeper and better consciousness. Watch and pray. What shall it profit a man to gain a new sensation, if he suffers a loss to his own personality? So may even an agnostic psychologist find some common ground with hermit and saint, and see the justification of a fundamental ascetical principle. Vigilance is the pre-requisite of conscious freedom.

With these two principles (1) the dynamic force of

[1] *Confessions of St. Augustine.* (Everyman's Library translation, p. 106).

the nascent idea as a factor in consciousness, and (2) the existence in states of consciousness of centres of instability, we have sufficient to give a psychological account of the vast bulk of conversion phenomena without invoking the sublimenal self or even sub-conscious elaboration as a pre-requisite. The agnostic will say these principles also eliminate the necessity for grace. *Distinguo*: we need not postulate an extraordinary and miraculous action to account for certain psychic changes, *transeat*; we get rid of the necessity of postulating any sort of Divine action, *negatur prorsus*. The laws of physics and chemistry do not get rid of the philosophical necessity of Divine concurrence and providence. Those changes which come within the ambit of nature come also into the sphere of grace, but the "how" and the "why" justly, *pace* M.de Fursac, belong to the realm of theology, and not of experimental psychology. The psychologist may discuss their mechanism as facts of consciousness, and the theory we have outlined is just as adequate to meet difficulties as the hypothesis of the sublimenal self or sub-conscious elaboration, as will be seen when we come to study these types of conversion experience in some detail. There are certain difficulties, however, which lie on the borderlands of positive psychology and theology, certain psychic facts half in and half beyond consciousness, for which our theory is inadequate. But we may console

ourselves with the reflection that the followers of James and Myers would fail more egregiously if they attempted explanation. They simply deny the facts or at least treat them as morbid hallucinations, as superimposed on a purely natural process, as spiritual epiphenomena. We refer to those cases where conversion entails the appearance in consciousness, if but dimly, of a new psychic feature not contained in the original "given" or aquired normally in the process of conversion. But are there such cases? Catholic religious experience affirms their existence, the agnostic either denies the reality of the experience or the justice of its interpretation. Roughly speaking, such cases are those where the activity of grace is so specifically marked as to force the inference of its presence as a quasi-conscious element of experience. The agnostic, of course, cannot possibly admit this, so he classes the phenomena among illusions of the sub-consciousness by disregarding their positive aspect. He reduces their psychic potential where he is candid enough to admit their existence. and so brings them within his system. Thus Delacroix deals with the mystical experiences of St Teresa, such as the psychological problem of intellectual visions and locutions.[1] Those features in her narratives which everyday psychical experience can grasp, follow and understand,

[1] Cf. Pacheu: *L' Expérience Mystique et l'Activité Sub-consciente* Paris ,Perrin, 1911, p. 75, etc.

are readily reducible to any theory we consider sufficient to account for our own experiences, other wise they would be unintelligible. When another's asserted experience goes beyond this limit, we must take the statement on faith, deny or explain it away The elder generation of agnostics denied, the younger explain by reduction. Given their point of view their theory works, but they fail to reconcile the the co-existence of beneficent practical activity with a state of more or less constant hallucinations. A mad world, my masters.

Mystical experiences are, of course, the extreme types of the special class of psychic phenomena to which we have refered. They are so sharply marked out from ordinary psychic happenings, so assertive of the "other" and the "beyond" in consciousness, as to be a perpetual challenge to agnostic psychology. Hence the strenuous effort to show that this sense of an activity other than self, yet in self, is an illusion of interpretation, a mere idealistic construction for for which consciousness claims objectivity as a necessity of its own internal experience. Here we have the bioplasm of modernism. "*Cum autem dormirent homines, venit inimicus ejus, et superseminavit zizania in medio tritici, et abiit*" (Mat. xiii., 25).

Apart from those ways of the spirit which are admittedly extraordinary and infrequent, in the ordinary path of spiritual life, we find psychic processes

which have, if but dimly, some of these characteristics. The more lively and vigorous manifestations of those states of consciousness, which the theologian attributes to the theological virtues, acts of Faith, Hope and Charity, contain within them features for which merely positive psychology fails to render a full *psychological* account. The belief of the convert in the Real Presence is something more in his consciousness than a reasoned assent on authority to the dogma of Transubstantiation. It is also an Adhesion to a Fact which holds within it something of the nature of a dim vision. "Videmus nunc per speculum in ænigmate" (1 Cor. xiii., 12). If he has to explain the why and wherefore, he will fail to convey to the non-believer this dim sense of veiled vision, which in his inmost self differentiates his present faith from his former "view," however strongly held. The highest Anglican, who held before his conversion to Catholicism the full Catholic sacramental doctrine of the Eucharist, does not change the dogmatic content of his consciousness on this point, or even perhaps the vigour of his assent, when he becomes a Catholic. Yet the Reality of the Presence in any Act of Communion is for him something quite different to his former experience. There is a new element in his consciousness. "Est autem fides sperandarum substantia rerum, argumentum non apparentium" (Hebrews xi., 1). He can only describe his experience in terms

prefaced by an " As if," so the Agnostic is quite satisfied that the new element is but a psychic construction necessitated by sentimental fervour. The convert thinks otherwise, and he, after all, is the person chiefly concerned.

It must be noted, however, that these deeper experiences are of an extraordinary delicate and gentle character, and, as such, are but seldom observed amid the turmoil of concomitant surface experience. It is in periods of drought that we look for and find the deeper springs. " In terra deserta, et invia, et inaquosa, sic in sancto apparui tibi." (Ps. lxii., 3). We have another text, also a classic with the mystics which illustrates very effectively this notion of varying depth in experience with its parallel in the degrees of our awareness of the psychic factors of the experience. " Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the Lord ; and behold the Lord passeth, and a great and strong wind before the Lord overthrowing the mountains and breaking the rocks in pieces : the Lord is not in the wind, and after the wind an earthquake : the Lord is not in the earthqake. And after the earthquake a fire : the Lord is not in the fire, and after the fire a sound of gentle stillness.[1] And when Elias heard it, he covered

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[1] Vulgate : sibilus aurae tenuis. Douay : a whistling of a gentle air. A.V. and R.V. : a still small voice. R.V. in margin : Heb. a sound of gentle stillness. The conventional English version, so familiar as a literary cliché, does not convey the *psychic value* as

his face with his mantle." (III. Kings xix., 11 et seq. Douay, I. Kings A.V.).

The psychologist may well explain the wind, the earthquake, and the fire, but if it is given to him to hear " the sound of gentle stillness " he will veil his face with Elias and adore.

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well as the Vulgate. So too the equally familiar "in a glass darkly " (I Cor. xiii. 12.) has much less value for the psychologist than the Vulgate : " per speculum in ænigmate " which follows the Greek more closely.

CHAPTER III

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF A REVIVAL

BEFORE proceeding to discuss the various types of religious conversion considered as a psychological process, we would like to restate very briefly our general position. For the postulates of the sublimenal self and sub-conscious elaboration in which the school of Myers and James seek the answer to the enigma, we would substitute:

(1) The existence in our states of consciousness of certain centres of instability. In the various consolidated groups of sensations, images, passions, concepts and volitions, potential or actual, which form together that complex which we call the field of consciousness, there is some one psychic element or small group of elements, which, being disturbed, the group of which it forms part breaks up, with a more or less general re-arrangement of the whole field as a result.

(2) The psychic dynamism of nascent ideas. By a nascent idea we understand, not a bare concept, but some psychic element, which may even be a complex of sensations, images, passions, concepts, and volitions, yet has a certain unity and simplicity taken as a whole, and which is a novelty in conscious-

ness, either as coming *suddenly* from without, as in ordinary apprehensions, or from within, from the deeper memory, or from the break-up of some psychic complex.

For such nascent ideas we claim a psychic energy far in excess of their force as ordinary elements of consciousness, just as nascent hydrogen is more chemically active than when fully evolved. Some degree of psychic passivity, as in automatic and spontaneous attention, is needed for the full display of this nascent activity which is controlled or controllable by conative attention.

We have now to examine how far these new postulates will serve to account for the phenomena of religious conversion, and we propose to deal first with those types known as evangelical or revivalistic conversions. The conversion-psychose in Protestant religious experience is so sharply marked off by its ordinary phenomena from nearly all types of Catholic experience, as seemingly to belong to another psychic order. There is, of course, a vast mass of Protestant religious experience where the conversion phase appears to be absent and the general gradual line of religious growth seems parallel with the ordinary spiritual development on Catholic lines, psychologically speaking. Starbuck has studied a very large number of such non-conversion cases among American Protestants, and his conclusions are rather striking.

The result which seemed to be attained in conversion and that which was working itself out during adolescence among those persons who have not experienced conversion are, at bottom, essentially the same, namely, the birth of human consciousness on a higher spiritual level. This is attended by the awakening of a fuller and keener self-consciousness, and at the same time, by the birth of a social instinct, which leads the person to reach out and feel his life one with that of the larger social, institutional, and spiritual worlds.[1]

A little further on he says:

But when we follow up the events which mark the trend of life after conversion, the crucial question we have just raised is almost directly answered, for we find that nearly all the persons are, sooner or later beset with the same difficulties that ordinarily attend adolescent development. Indeed, the percentage of those difficulties in this group of persons is slightly greater than in the case of those whose growth was not attended by conversion.

From this it would appear that James's classification of religious types into the " once-born " and the " twice-born " is a division rather of psychic process than of psychic result, and we might consider the conversion-psychose as an adaptation of the Spiritual Exercises a l'Americaine, a sort of religious quick-lunch.

Starbuck in his enquiry has dealt with ordinary cases where the conversion experience was claimed, and has based his results on his statistics of such

[1] Starbuck, *The Psychology of Religion*, 3rd Edition, p. 354.

ordinary cases, quite normal in the various denominations to which the cases belonged, rather than on a few limited and striking cases where the conversion-psychose presents abnormal and almost morbid features. The Catholic director would be inclined to regard the majority of his cases as forms of sensible consolations viewed by their recipients through Protestant spectacles, otherwise illusion of interpretation to some extent, or simple natural emotions interpreted by pious imaginations. Such errors and illusions are far from uncommon among devout Catholics.

Some persons, on account of their penances, prayers, and vigils, or even merely because of debility of health, can receive no spiritual consolation without being overcome by it. . . . The more they lose self-control, the more do their feelings get possession of them, because the body grows more feeble. They fancy this is a trance and call it one, but I call it nonsense; it does nothing but waste their time and injure their health.[1]

Few of these milder types of the conversion-psychose present psychological difficulties. They are reducible to the process we studied when dealing with the Spiritual Exercises. It must be borne in mind that the dogmatic systems of these evangelical denominations are much more simple, psychologically, than

[1] St. Teresa, *The Interior Castle*, IV, c. 3, § 11. The English does not render the quip in the original: "y en su seso les parece arrobamiento; y llámole yo abobamiento," *La madre fundadora* of Carmel was rather more critical of religious experience than some Protestant ministers.

that of the Catholic Church, and the process of an effective retreat might well be compressed into a meditation. The subjects, too, are rather more emotional than Catholics as a rule. All these tend to psychologic simplification and abbreviation. We must look, then, for the cases we require rather to the extreme features of revivals and such like, than to the ordinary sort of conversion cases. Some even of the more striking cases may be reduced psychologically to the process referred to, if we bear in mind the Evangelical Protestant view of faith.

Sed fides est specialis, seu potius personalis, qua quis credit hic et nunc sibi sua peccata non esse imputata; fides haec est ergo fiducia, et quidem firma et certa, suae propriae justificationis hoc instanti habitae. Hunc autem elicientes, seu potius hoc animi motu perculsi, praesertim in conventibus Methodistarum, quasi extra se rapti, altos saepissime edunt clamores, et etiam aliquando spasmis et convulsionibus agitantur.[1]

Dr. Murray cites many examples, among others the following from the diary of Isaac Septimus Nullis (1828-1865), an English Methodist preacher well known in Ireland in his day.

1 Murray, *Tractatus De Gratia*; Dublin: M. H. Gill et filius 1877, p. 316. "But it is that special, or rather, personal faith by which one believes *hic et nunc* that his sins are not imputed to him; hence this faith is the firm and certain confidence of his own justification at that very moment. They who elicit such an act or rather whose minds are thus moved, more especially at Methodist meetings being quite carried away shout loudly very often and are even sometimes attacked by spasms and convulsions."

Jan. 12th, 1851. Brother George Smith came home with me from chapel. Just as dinner was over, I said, "I believe Jesus died for me; don't you, George?" "Yes," was the the reply. "Don't you, Maria?" (our servant). "Yes," she said. I said, "I believe my sins are pardoned; don't you, George?" "Yes." "Don't you, Maria?" No reply. I said, "Let us pray." We knelt down and prayed—got into the conflict: after an hour and a half hard fighting, deliverance came; she believed and was filled with joy and peace, filled full of heavenly influence. We did shout. A young man came in weeping, and said he felt the glory out in the road, so that he was constrained to come in.[1]

Doubtless the preacher's prayer was very eloquent and argumentative, full of considerations expressed with much force and unction, and would suffice to incline the servant's mind to a solution to which it was already predisposed. Psychologically the case is on all fours with an Ignatian meditation. The resultant excitement and joy was the very natural consequence of a sense of relief from the feeling of reprobation. The Methodists of that day did not hesitate to preach Hell fire with a vigour which shocks the modern psychologist very profoundly. Yet their sermons do not appear to have been much stronger, in descriptive work at least, than those preached by Catholic missionaries. It was in the certainty of damnation, rather than in its terrors, that their sermons differed. A man was infallibly lost unless he could

[1] Op. cit., p. 346.

feel that his sins were forgiven. Hence these comminatory discourses were psychological depressives and reduced the hearers to a state of most acute misery. Another doctrinal feature was the total depravity of human nature, its total incapacity to elicit any spiritual act with the logical corollary that the presence of spiritual emotion was a manifest sign of grace and regeneration. With this dogmatic basis for the field of consciousness, we have two potent factors of disintegration ready to hand, (1) a general state of acute tension and stress, the fear of hell, and (2) a well marked and *known* centre of instability, the conviction that a spiritual consolation was a certain sign of regeneration. The whole revivalist "method" tended to the creation of these two factors, if they did not exist already. All that remained to complete the conversion was to evoke the nascent idea which could act through the centre of instability; in other words, to evoke some spiritual emotion of a consoling nature in the subject's consciousness. To secure an effective conversion, the three factors must be energetic. A moderate apprehension of eternal damnation, such as is found in the Catholic sinner, would not work in this process. The fear must be great and imminent, the subject must be made to see himself as in the Enfield sermon of Jonathan Edwards:

The unconverted are now walking over the pit of hell

on a rotten cover, and there are innumerable places in this covering so weak that they will not bear their weight, and these places are not seen.[1]

Only by such strenuous present terror could the necessary psychic tension be secured. With less tension the relief-reaction would be too feeble, the field of consciousness might oscillate, but it would hardly disintegrate, at least as a general rule. Hence the efforts of revivalists to provoke, and reinforce this tension.

The second element, the dogmatic position which secured the existence, and, as it were, located the position of the centre of instability, had also to be sharply and firmly defined in consciousness. If a consolation does not of necessity imply a state of grace and acceptance before God, as Catholics hold, it might come and go but it would not, unless very extraordinary, overwhelm the whole field of consciousness. Hence the extraordinary difference in reaction to milder spiritual stimuli between the Catholic and the Evangelical Protestant. We may trace the decline in the frequency and violence of revival conversions to a certain weakening of Protestant confidence in the significance of consolatory religious experience. The elder generation had no doubts about it, or about the reality, certainty, and imminence of eternal damnation for the " unconverted " and thus their religious consciousness was the exact spiritual analogue of a

[1] Quoted in Davenport, *Primitive Traits in Religious Revivals*. London: Macmillan, 1910, p. 110.

Rupert's drop, ready to fly into fragments the moment the centre of instability was touched.

The touching of this vital spot was, however, the great difficulty, All that was needed was a vigorous nascent idea in the shape of some marked consolation the sense of the Infinite Mercy, that Christ died for sinners, etc. All the efforts of the Protestant evangelist were devoted to suggesting some such consolation to the consciousness of those under "conviction." But the psychic stress of "conviction" tended to inhibit all consoling thoughts. The unhappy subjects were so obsessed with the idea of their parlous state, that no inlet could often be found for any contrary psychic element. It needed great tact to find the requisite opening, and it often happened that the liberating nascent idea found an entrance almost as it were by accident. Where a direct suggestion was repelled, some casual text or line from a hymn found its way and effected the needful change.

It would be an error to look upon these psychic revolutions as merely the logical results of Calvinistic dogmatism, even in cases where sudden conversion is unaccompanied by any abnormal phenomena, and but for its suddenness is a quiet process. Doctrine is a great factor in the process, but in itself it is a psychological rather than a logical process, and dogma can only be regarded as one of the factors. With the decline of dogmas in modern Protestantism we

find a corresponding decline in the conversion-psychose, the types are milder in character and more infrequent at revivals. That Universalism which is now so common among Protestants that they are gravely shocked at an old-fashioned booklet like Father Furniss's *Sight of Hell*, has made it much more difficult for revivalists to secure that initial tension necessary to the full development of the conversion-psychose. The ordinary careless healthy Christian is unimpressed where his sire and grandsire were terrified almost to madness. To-day, as of old, we get cases of this psychose, but with people of somewhat different moral and physical temperaments. The public sinner, stricken with keen remorse, or the more unstable and neurotic among lesser offenders, now furnish the bulk of cases, where conversion is of the sudden and overwhelming kind. Save in Wales, during the Evan Robert's revival, we seldom find crowds swept off their feet as in the great historic revivals, and the reason we suggest is the weakening of the dogmatic factor in the Protestant consciousness.

The following case[1] illustrates the process we have outlined :—

At Penrhiw, the Revivalist, in his address to the unsaved, used an illustration describing a man collecting sea-birds'

[1] J. J. Morgan, *The '59 Revival in Wales: Some Incidents in the Life and Work of David Morgan, Ysbytty*; Mold: J. J. Morgan 1909, p. 60. A delighful and touching account of David Morgan the Revivalist's work, by his son.

eggs on a rock-bound coast. While his friends above hold the rope which was tied around him, he descends on his perilous quest. It is a stormy day, the winds swing him in the void, and the rope rubs against the teeth of the rocks. To his consternation, he observes that the sharp precipice has already severed one strand of the rope. He shouts apprehensively to his mates above, but his cry is lost in the whistling of the wind. "Haul me up! Haul me up!" he shrieks as he swings, horror struck to see another and yet another strand sundered by the jagged crag. "You hang by a frail and fraying rope over the abyss of eternity. What means that shooting pain in your head? A strand in the rope has gone. What is that crick in your back? Another strand parted. You lost your sleep the other night! Another fibre severed! The last strand will snap one of these next days. You may be raised to safety to-night and your feet set upon a rock."

The arch-swearer of the parish was in the service, listening with such an insolent and offensive air that some of the deacons thought he ought to be asked to leave the building. When some overflowing saint broke out in "praise" old Isaac would burst into contemptuous laughter When David Morgan was in the midst of his conversation with a bevy of young women, who had that evening chosen the good part, Isaac rushed in with a distracted countenance, every hair on end with excitement. "What has brought you *back*?" asked the preacher quietly. "I failed to go *on*," was the reply. After finishing with all the others, the Revivalist asked again, "What made you return?" "I was afraid to advance," said Isaac. "The abyss you described gaped before my feet; I could see devils, and hell ready to swallow me alive. When I turned back

the road was clear. I turned homewards again, and the mouth of hell immediately yawned in front of me. Here I am, but I don't know in the world what for?" "Would you like to enter the society?" "No, I haven't thought of that." "Why have you come back, then?" "Man, haven't I told you it was because I failed to go on?" "Why shouldn't you join the church?" "I am a fearful swearer; I have oftentimes cursed and swore out of fun just to shock these deacons." "You must give up swearing." "Oh, I could'nt possibly do that." "Will you do this, then? Each time you swear, drop on your knees and say "Lord, help me not to swear, for Christ's sake. Amen." "I will, by————" promised Isaac. Having asked the Church to give the right hand of fellowship to the seventeen young women, he brought before them the case of Isaac as a special sinner. "Isaac has failed to go on, but he has come back. He has been eminent in blasphemy; he intends now to become eminent in prayer. Are you willing to receive Isaac, once the great swearer, henceforth the great in prayer?" All wept, save Isaac, whose every gesture testified, "I'm but a stranger here." The converts of '59 generally bowed their heads, weeping—Isaac sat bolt upright, staring around. When the Revivalist asked for the usual show of hands, Isaac leaped to his feet, and looked around sharply to see whether everyone signified willingness to accept him; then he turned towards the deacon's seat, and when he saw that they all held their hands up in his favour, the surprise made the strain insupportable, and he began to moan like a wounded animal, and he could not be silenced. The habit of swearing disappeared like a pricked bubble, and soon his gift of prayer became one of the assets of the Church at Penrhiw.

We have here the stages of the process very well marked : (1) The sinner's original state of consciousness, profanity and impudence dominant over religious feelings. (2) The stress developed by the Rivivalist, fear of hell, here and now. (3) A centre of instability, formed by the assurance of possible salvation, here and now. (4) The stress operating on the religious consciousness, and inducing vivid conviction of sin, so keen as to produce visual hallucinations and inhibitions. He could not return home. (5) Confession of his state, and willingness to amend, induced by this stress, and the hope of relief. (6) The hope of relief is the nascent idea, and it becomes operative when he sees that the church members are willing to receive him *Then he breaks down.* (7) This acceptance breaks up the whole field of consciousness, and so rearranges it that the habit of profanity is driven out.

It will be noted that our purely psychologic analysis places the crisis of the psychose later than the author, who is looking at the conversion solely from the religious point of view. He seems to regard Isaac as technically converted before he knew whether he would be voted into membership of the church or no. But the psychic revolution, as revealed in the break-down, came, evidently, later, when he saw the actual vote.

Another case from the same revival reveals very clearly the extraordinary psychic dynamism of the nascent idea.

At Barmouth, Evan Phillips, Emlyn, preaching on Luke xvi. 26, remarked that the conscience of a careless sinner carried within itself the materials of eternal woe. "There is a guilty conscience asleep in the sinner's breast, as a man carries a match-box in his pocket without thinking of it; but in a day to come, I behold Justice striking the match across the throne of God, and the guilty soul is a flame for ever." In the crowd sat a shoemaker of superior intellectual capacity, but irreligious. Pulpit admonitions fell as unheeded upon him as anvil sparks on the blacksmith's dog. He was fifty years old, and had a crop of black hair. The remark quoted above crashed into his soul, like an explosive bullet into a soldier's breast. He gave himself to God and to His people, but passed through bitter experiences before entering into peace. In that storm of soul, his black hair grew snow-white in two nights; then every hair dropped off, until his head was as bare as the back of his hand, and after a short season of baldness another crop of white hair grew on his naked pate. This again dropped off, and was replaced by a crop of black hair such as he had at first. He became eminent as a praying man, and when he saw Mr. Phillips some years afterwards, he told him, "You have pulled all my hair out, my boy, but God gave it back again, and the hope of eternal life has grown along with it."[1]

We see here the stress between the religious tendencies and the irreligious, inhibiting the entrance of the nascent idea in its conventional forms, but when it slipped through in the shape of a rather

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[1] Op. cit., p. 109. Cf. for two analogous morbid cases, Forel: *Hypnotism* p. 113 (English Translation, Rebman, London, 1906).

quaint figure of speech, it produced such a fearful shake-up of all the field of consciousness, that the physical reaction was quite extraordinary. Here, the fear of hell was the centre of instability, but masked by the shoemaker's irreligious bent. The novel image circumvented the habitual inhibitions.

It is not easy to parallel revival cases with an instance of Catholic conversion, but the following will show the working of a similar psychic process where the factors of religion and race are far other than in the Wales of '59.

I found myself, one day at the end of my course of sermons, in the presence of an old man, who had formerly occupied a high position. "Father," he said, "I wish to make my peace with God. I am eighty years old. I cannot remember, during all that time, one single act of religion. I am sure, however, that I was baptized a Catholic, because I had to get the baptismal certificate when I was married. That's all." "You have not even made your first communion?" I asked. "I have no recollection." he said, emphasizing his words with a slow, hesitating, circular gesture, as if including his whole life. "But you must have had reasons to keep away from religion?" "Evidently. I did not believe in it." "Would you tell me," I said, "some of your reasons; we will discuss them, and I will tell you, on my side, why we believe." "Oh, no!" he cried, "not that. I would never get there. It would only bother me. You quoted the other day a phrase of Diderot: "He who knows not the reasons for faith, is only an ignorant fellow." That settled me. I saw I

was an ignorant fellow before the awful problem. As an ignorant fellow I surrender." I could not get him away from that point : his sense of faith was so genuine that I gave up the idea. The day after the old man made his first Communion ; he died shortly after.[1]

Old age, the sense of approaching death, the mission supplied the tension, the question put to self on the verge of eternity. The hidden centre of instability was the sense of ignorance revealed and touched by the nascent idea, a quotation ! Need we remind the reader again that we are only analyzing these cases from the point of view of psychology, and studying their psychic mechanism ? The other questions they suggest are beyond our jurisdiction as psychologists.

There are three fairly well marked stages in the conversion-psychose ; (1) *Awakening*, that is the initiative of psychic stress by the realization of one's unsatisfactory spiritual state ; (2) *Conviction*, the stress resolving itself under the influence of the nascent depressive idea into an acute psychic crises with the formation of centres of psychic instability, and (3) *Deliverance*, the stress dissolved by some other nascent consolatory idea with disintegration of the field of religious consciousness and formation of a new field. In Catholic religious life, those three stages would correspond with the first week of the Spiritual Ex-

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[1] R. P. A. Gardeil, O.P., *La Crédibilité et l'Apologètique* ; Paris Lecoffre, 2nd Ed., 1912, p. 142.

ercises, awakening in the various meditations, with conviction developed by the examens of conscience, and deliverance coming with repentance and sacramental absolution. The analogy of the quick-lunch is not too far-fetched after all. The Exercises accomplish slowly and quietly those psychic changes which the revival method rushes. We may observe in passing that the decline in revival methods corresponds curiously with the decline in Calvinistic doctrine, and a growing Pelagianism, which greatly complicates the conversion-psychose. Doubtless, the David Morgans of the future will conduct retreats rather than run revivals. Finney to-day would be Father . . . ; we leave the reader to supply the missing word.

The stages of Conviction and Deliverance, in the more extreme revival types, are of chief interest to the psychologist on account of the remarkable character of their somatic phenomena, quite apart from their psychic manifestations. Before considering this aspect of revival conversions, we will briefly examine a point of some interest, post-conversion inhibitions, as we have here a marked divergence between Catholic and Protestant religious experience. When a man is converted, and becomes a reformed character, what, psychologically speaking, becomes of his old vices? Do they still remain as elements of consciousness, controlled, checked and neutralized by opposing virtues as we saw in our study of the

Exercises, or do they pass away from consciousness altogether? Does the converted drunkard become a sober man by recovering his will power to resist the craving for alcohol, or does the craving itself vanish?

The cessation of the craving for alcohol, as a sequel to the conversion-psychose, is, we think, well established in a large number of recorded cases. But before we invoke the fact, as evidence of a moral miracle, we should ascertain whether the alcoholism of the convert was a substantive, or an adjective vice; did he drink for drink's sake, or did he drink to relieve depression otherwise caused? Or through mere good-fellowship? If the drink passion were secondary, an effect of other psychic causes, their removal would abolish the craving in all probability. If a passion is merely a secondary dependent psychic element in our field of consciousness, we can suppress it by a change in that field, by switching off attention, by breaking it up in its cause. So with the drink craving. A change of scene, of occupation, above all of interest, may effect a cure, and destroy the craving The passion for drink may be merely a symptom of nervous disorder; cure the malady, and the craving will pass away. By breaking up the old field of consciousness, and giving the convert a new centre of attention, a new grouping and subordination of the psychic elements which

constitute his field, the conversion-psychose tends to throw out those elements it fails to adjust and assimilate. Alcoholism is such an aggressive psychic element, not so much in itself as in its physiological consequences, that it cannot be assimilated ; it must be smothered, or cast into oblivion, or it will dominate consciousness. Hence we have two types of expulsion one to the surface, the other to the deeper memory. The desire may be there, but controlled more or less perfectly ; or it may cease altogether. To the onlooker, the latter may seem the more marvellous, yet the vice so consigned to oblivion may have been but a sympton of general moral disorder, and in itself psychologically unimportant. But where the vicious tendency subsists, but is chained and controlled, there it may well have been the capital sin. The story "Old Born Drunk" in Begbie's *Broken Earthenware*, is a picturesque and very striking case of abolition of the craving for alcohol, produced by a well-marked conversion-psychose, but though the result was marvellous to the onlooker, the interior change may very possibly have been less, *as regards the specific vice of drunkenness*, than in the following, where the craving was not abolished :—

He had been the champion fighter of Beaufort Hill, a daily terror to his family, and always in trouble with the police. When he came home from the public-house, his wife and children fled from his fury until the morrow, and his first proceeding in the morning was to go through every

room in the house, trembling with misgiving lest he had murdered one of them during the night. This son of Belial was brought to God during the Revival. By-and-by he approached the Lord's Table. At this time non-intoxicating wine was not used, and on the Monday he said: "I felt all the devils of Gehenna stirring in my bosom after drinking the wine. If there had been a tavern in sight when I came out, I would have plunged headlong into it." He was elected an elder in a few years, and died full of days and honour.[1]

In the first case we quoted from the '59 Revival in Wales, we had an example of the post-conversion inhibition of the dominant vice of profanity. We have a more curious instance in the following:—

In an evening service, a coarse and callous farmer was strangely affected. Previously the dialect of Gehenna contained no shibboleth too difficult for his tongue. In the morning he was alarmed by the consciousness of a mysterious and revolutionary change in himself. *He was unable to swear.* He said to himself, like Samson, "I will go out as at other times before, and shake myself." But his evil strength had departed, and he was weak and was as another man. He sought his servants at their work, imagining that he would there find sufficient reasons for the exercise of his cherished habit, but for the life of him he couldn't rap out a single oath. Then he realised that his ailment required a drastic remedy, and thought as a last resort, that if he could see some neighbour's sheep trespassing on his pasture the lost faculty would be recovered. So he climbed a hill that was near, but nothing availed. He began to tremble in every limb. "What

[1] *The '59 Revival in Wales*, p. 105.

is this?" cried he. "I can't *swear*; what if I tried to *pray*?" He fell on his knees among the furze-bushes, and continued a man of prayer as long as he lived.[1]

Here was the will to swear, but not the capacity, the *velle* without the *posse*. Is it a paradox of grace, or post-hypnotic suggestion? The author, throughout, lays much stress on this inhibition of profanity. Like drink, blasphemy is a very manifest vice, and peculiarly shocking; but like drink, its psychological importance may be small. With the vast number of foul-mouthed people, the oath or obscenity is but a vocal automatism, practically a reflex act, with but little of the self in it. It has become a nervous "tic," and needs no great psychic revolution to get rid of it. The conversion-psychose meant for the farmer a sort of aphasia, affecting his centres of profanity. Unfortunately, we are not given an account of the sermon he heard the night before, and how he was impressed, but it is clear that if his conversion-psychose led him to acts of prayer, and impressed him with the need for prayer, and the malice of its opposite profanity, the inhibition is a quite natural sequel. It is not necessary to assume either a miracle or hypnotic suggestion. The nascent idea in itself has sufficient dynamism to produce many of the effects of hypnotism proper if we consider it in its totality. We must not regard it as something

[1] Op. cit., p. 21.

abstracted from the psychic conditions of its origin; if it arises from the sermon of the evangelist, his personality is a factor in it. The vivid phrase which smites the centre of instability has an added psychic momentum from the personal qualities of the man who sends it forth, as a winged word, to the revival congregation.

Now nearly all the great revivalists, notably Wesley, Finney, and David Morgan, were very remarkable for their personal power over individuals and crowds. Wesley's portraits represent a man of mild temper, yet he again and again faced and tamed hostile mobs, as at Wednesbury and Bolton.[1] Finney's portrait shows a face of quite extraordinary power.

At Evans Mills a powerfully-built and very evil man went to one of the meetings with a loaded pistol, with a plan to shoot the evangelist while he was preaching; but instead, he was so transfixed by the personality which confronted him that he sat down, shrieking in an agony of terror. Next morning, Mr. Finney met this man on a street of the town. "Good-morning," he said to the would-be murderer, "how do you feel in your mind this morning?" The man related to Finney his experiences during a sleepless night. He had wrestled with God in prayer, but with no sense of relief. He had even lost the conviction of sin which was present in his mind the evening before, and had come away from the place of unsuccessful communion with the Almighty. "But," said he, "when I saw you, my heart began to burn and grow hot within me, and instead of feeling as if I wanted to avoid you, I felt so drawn that I came across the street to see you."[2]

[1] *Wesley's Journal*, Pitman, pp. 114 and 175.

[2] Davenport, *Primitive Traits in Religious Revivals*, p. 196.

David Morgan had also a very striking countenance, and the first quotation we have given, shows what was his influence over individuals. Coming from such men, a mere phrase, which, in cold print, is nothing, becomes a power of suggestion, easily capable of causing inhibitions of muscular action, and even visual hallucinations.

Their personal power, too, was increased by the nature of their usual audiences. They were crowds, psychological crowds. There is a certain psychic passivity in the very act of listening, and it is vastly increased when we listen, not as individuals, but as a crowd. It is not necessary to assume with Davenport, following Le Bon and Durkeim,[1] any more or less fanciful analogy of the mind of the crowd, and the mind of primitive man. All we need postulate is an increase of psychic passivity. The crowd is more receptive of nascent ideas and more disturbed by them than the component individuals taken privately. There is a drop in conative attention, a lowering of the sense of personal responsibility. The field of consciousness of a crowd is shallow and mobile, *Mobile Vulgus*, the very name of mob is psychological. Not only is the field shallow, but it is more limited than in the individual, *qua* individual. A crowd can only attend to one thing at a time. A field of consciousness

[1] Cf. Davenport, op. cit., chap. iii., the whole chapter is important, though the point of view is not ours.

which is shallow, restricted and mobile, with strong reaction to suggestion, and forming in itself a sort of artificial personality, what is it but *hysteria*?

The hysterical subject reacts more strongly than a normal person to certain types of experiences; this impressionability does not exclude apathy and indifference towards other things which interest a normal person. The hysteric sees everything at a particular angle. As to assimilation, such dispositions result in shutting the subject up in a narrow round of personal anxieties and make him incapable of seeing the situation in a comprehensive and objective manner. As to reactions, the hysteric displays a change in co-ordination, is impulsive and capricious, with brief enthusiasms, so that anything he takes up eagerly he soon drops through boredom and fatigue.[1]

Thus Pierre Janet describes the hysteric; will not the description fit any ordinary crowd? With the absence of conative attention in any individual, any nascent idea can exercise its full and natural dynamism from the moment it evokes automatic attention, or mere psychic curiosity, until it is absorbed by the spontaneous attention of interest. Most of the individuals in a psychological crowd are victims of psychic determinism, for they will not exert their conative attention; they drift mentally and morally. Hence it is that in revival crowds we find the conversion-psychose in its most acute forms.

Throughout the Welsh Period of '59, as pictured in

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[1] De la Vaissière, *Eléments de Psychologie Experimentale*, p. 299.

the book we have been quoting from, the psychological crowd was a foremost feature. What is such a crowd?

It is not the mere physical sense of the word, the mass of men, of which Le Bon is thinking (in his study *The Crowd*). He means a group of persons, small or large, who are for the time being in some kind of mental agreement; who are a mental unity or practically so. A lynching party is a crowd. A political meeting is a crowd. Le Bon reasons that the individual is one thing in such company, and another thing out of it. The crowd for the time being swallows him up, and has feelings of its own, thoughts of its own, a character of its own.[1]

The open-air revival meetings, the chapel gatherings, were all marked examples of the psychological crowd.

A certain service was overwhelmed by the "rapture" of the students. Later the minister asked, "Why in the world did you make such a commotion to-night, boys? What was the matter with you Thomas Charles?" "Mr. Hughes," he replied, "had you offered me a thousand pounds a month ago for shouting like that, I couldn't; but to-night, if you had placed a thousand pounds in my hand for being silent, I could not refrain from praising God."[2]

At an open-air meeting in Carnarvonshire where some 30,000 were present, we read the account[3]:—

The moment the preaching ceased, prayer-meetings would begin around the waggons scattered over the field. With every striking petition, a great shout from the throng rent the welkin, now at this point of the field, now at

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[1] Davenport, op. cit., p. 25.

[2] *The '59 Revival in Wales*, p. 121. [3] Ibid. p. 145.

another. . . . Taking one another by the hand, they would at times dance, leap, sing, pray, exhort, shout, and "rejoice" incessantly working their several ways through the maze, like a hive of bees that have discovered a virgin bed of flowers. Suddenly, perhaps the social bond would be dissolved, and each would become absorbed in the contemplation of his own treasures. If a chair become empty for a moment, some one would immediately jump upon it, and from that coign of vantage shout a hymn or a verse at the top of his voice. Many were cast into trances or swoons, when, unconscious of their surroundings, they would declaim or soliloquise with unintermitting fluency, even as they were borne out of the field by their friends.

Another instance of crowd psychology, revealing *psychic automatism* as a sequel to excitement :—

A Methodist lady was yoked to an Episcopalian husband, who disdained to accompany her to the Revival meetings in her chapel, saying he did not believe in revivalistic excitement, and bidding her go alone to her own place. Her importunity finally prevailed, and he accompanied her. The atmosphere of the service was heavily charged with heavenly magnetism, and the Churchman soon grew uneasy. " I'll have to shout," he whispered. " No, don't," she curtly replied. The surge of his emotions becoming nigh intolerable, he said again, " I *must* shout." " Go to your own place to shout," rejoined the wife dryly. The rising tide threatening to submerge him, he said, " I must shout or die." " Well, shout if you must," answered the wife. Immediately he began to cry with a loud-sounding, recitative voice : " I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, etc."[1]

[1] Ibid. p. 185.

This repetition of the Creed by the Anglican, shows the psychic automatism of these external manifestations. Conative and reflex control having ceased, the surface memory projects its immediate content. With the Anglican it was a well-remembered part of his usual service; it would be probably a mosaic of Bible texts with the Dissenter, or verses of some well-known hymn. An unsympathetic but careful observer of the '59 revival in Ulster wrote to the late Dr. Salmon

The reality of the "Conversion" is supposed to be tested by "the gift of prayer." The converts cannot be restrained from trying their newly-found power, and I have been sometimes surprised by the appropriateness of their language. This *latter* feature, however, as we might have expected, is by no means common. They have got off by heart a few common texts of Scripture, and one or two set phrases, which they hear at the revival meeting, and which they cast into the shape of a prayer.[1]

The following instance, taken from the '59 Revival in Ulster, illustrates rather well the psychic influence of the psychological crowd, and the character of the liberating nascent idea. There was a huge open-air meeting in Coleraine, some 4,000 were present, and it was decided to divide up the meeting into four, each one to be in charge of a minister. Mr Canning, one of the ministers, states:—

[1] George Salmon, D.D., F.T.C.D. *The Evidences of the Work of the Holy Spirit*: A Sermon preached at St. Stephen's Church, Dublin, on July 3rd, 1859, with an Appendix on the Revival Movement in the North of Ireland; Dublin: Hodges, Smith & Co., 1859, p. 47.

On set purpose he determined that anything he should say should be as little exciting as possible, and that he should endeavour simply and calmly to preach the Gospel He read his text, and made a few remarks ; but, on looking into the countenances of the people he was struck with the intensity of their gaze, for which he could not account. He could see distinctly that there was an anxiety and earnestness to hear what he was saying, such as he had never witnessed before. He went on for five or six minutes, and at the end of that time a strong man in the crowd fell to the ground as if smitten with a severe blow, In five minutes or so in the other congregations similar scenes took place, until there were thirty individuals lying prostrate in the market square of Coleraine. Of course he immediately brought the service to a close, and made his way to the man who had first fallen, whom he found perfectly conscious, but as helpless as a child. Upon being asked what was the matter with him, the man, with a cry of horror such as he had never before heard, said it was a consciousness of sin—that it was as if hell was before him; that he had often heard and talked about sin before, but had never seen it ; and that cry once again went forth from the lungs of that strong man. . . . In these circumstances he used all his powers to pour into the distressed man's mind the comforts of the Gospel in his own language; but his efforts were vain, and the man made no signs until he did what he should have done at first—repeated the very words of Scripture, and put the truth in the form in which the Spirit of God puts it. Instantly the closed eyes were opened, and a change came over the man's countenance ; the cry ceased ; and in five or six minutes more the change so graphically described had taken place

on that man's countenance; and in five minutes more that strong man rose up, apparently as strong physically as ever he was; and from that day to this he was indeed a changed man, walking in the fear of the Lord, and, he believed, in the comfort of the Holy Ghost.[1]

Here we have the crowd, rather than the preacher, as the generator of tension. It is to be noted that the consolatory idea took the form of well-known texts, to which the pious narrator seems to attach a sacramental efficacy. They were familiar, however, while his exposition of them demanded an exertion of intelligence, of which the state of stress in the convert did not allow. The well-known text circumvented the psychic inhibitions.

The psychological crowd had a far greater rôle in the '59 Revival in Ulster, than in Wales, where the personal influence of the evangelists was so marked. The preachers in Ulster were almost reduced to mere spectators; the movement sprang from the crowd, and swept the ministers in its train. They had very little to do with the originating crisis; their part was limited to administering consolation to those who had "taken" the revival. It was a crowd-psychose all through, and widely differed in spirituality from the Welsh movement. With all its extravagances, the latter

[1] A Visit to the Scenes of Revival in Ireland, Parts II & III of *Revivals in Ireland*, by James William Massie, D.D., LL.D., Secretary of the Irish Evangelical Society; London: John Snow, 35 Paternoster Row, E.C., 1859, p. 80.

appeared profoundly religious in tone, quaint, but with an almost Franciscan quaintness. The Ulster Revival was more akin to tarantism and the "convulsionaires" of St. Médard.

In one of these circles we noticed a case of terrible severity—one in which visions of unspeakable horror must have been pictured to the imagination of the unhappy sufferer. A young woman lay extended at full length—her eyes closed, her hands clasped and elevated, and her body curved in a spasm so violent that it appeared to rest arch-like, upon her heels and the back portion of her head. In that position she lay, without speech or motion, for several minutes.

Suddenly she uttered a terrific scream, and tore handfuls of hair from her uncovered head. Extending her open hands in a repelling attitude of the most appalling terror, she exclaimed, "Oh! that fearful pit! Lord Jesus save me! I am a sinner, a most unworthy sinner—but, O Lord, take *him* away, take *him* away! O Christ, come—come quickly! Oh, Savour of sinners, *remove him from my sight*!" During this paroxysm three strong men were hardly able to restrain her.[1]

So common were these morbid phenomena during the Ulster Revival of '59, that many cases of insanity resulted. Dr. Salmon quotes a sympathiser with the movement as writing:[2]

There is another side of the picture which I am almost afraid to turn to you, but I feel that I would not be doing my duty if I would keep it back. There are three or four

[1] Ibid. Part I, p. 23.

[2] Salmon, *Evidences*, etc., p. 31.

persons in this locality who have not got better from their conviction, and are raving maniacs as yet. I cannot look upon them without shuddering. They seem to answer the description of those given in the New Testament as possessed of devils. This is, as I think, God's mysterious work, but I cannot fathom it.

The prostrations, inhibitions, trances, and other abnormal phenomena throughout the Ulster Revival are almost of an exclusively morbid type. Except in some American revivals, it would not be easy to find such extreme manifestations. They are of great interest to the alienist, and the student of morbid psychology, but they are only a side issue in the study of the conversion-psychose. Davenport has dealt at length with such physical outcrops in his *Primitive Traits in Religious Revivals*, and regards them as much more substantial features than we are inclined to do. He uses them as proofs of recrudescence of primitive instincts in these psychoses. There is more than a little of "medical materialism" in his system. We must account for these explosions more simply, for we cannot ignore their comparative absence in the largest body of Christian religious experience, that of Catholics. They are also rare among Anglicans. During the Ulster Revival of '59, the then Established Church was, on the whole, opposed to the Revival, at least in its more orgiastic features. It was only in certain parts of Ulster that the Revival was at all general among Protestants. It left the Catholics

untouched, save a very doubtful sporadic case or two, and what is more, did not notably affect Protestants in those parts of Ireland where Catholics were in the majority. Dogma, of course, was a great factor, but as far as regards Calvinism, there was little to choose between the Episcopalians and other Irish Protestants in '59. Liturgy, and the sense of church order, were the restraining forces. Neither in the Catholic, nor in the Established Church was the ecclesiastical "crowd" suffered to become a mob. There was a discipline which repressed "singularity," and the "note" of every revival,in the Protestant Evangelical sense of the word, was precisely " singularity." Stress was laid on the necessity of "personal religion," that is, of spiritual singularity, of individualism. Singularity in matters of devotion easily runs to extravagance, and has always been discouraged by Catholics and by Anglicans, who have a sense of corporate worship. It was felt to be disorderly, from the liturgical point of view, and even in private devotion, was regarded as objectionable. There are few points more strongly insisted on by Catholic spiritual writers than the duty of avoiding singularity in one's devotions, even those which are strictly private. Hence, the idea of a layman leading the congregation in prayer, or interrupting a service with ejaculations or extempore collects is quite unthinkable. Take this element of sporadic prayer out of the Welsh or Ulster Revival meeting, and its cha-

racteristic feature is gone. During the Evan Roberts Revival, De Fursac remarked that attempts to restrain spontaneous exuberance, to create more order and discipline in the services, only resulted in a damping down of the revival spirit.[1] The repression of singularity inculcated as a duty by Catholic directors is, in the eyes of the revivalist, a quenching of the Spirit.

We find some curious examples of this "singularity" in devotion in Wales.

It is described in Welsh by a variety of words, such as *gorfoleddu*, "rejoicing"; *mwynhad*, "rapture"; and *moliannu*, "praising." At its best, this "praise" would be characterized by a delightful spontaneity and *abandon*, and illuminated by a glow of spiritual insight and passion that lifted it to the highest levels of that worship which is spirit and truth. Sometimes it would be a soliloquy addressed to the speaker's own soul, dilating on one's hopes and fears, triumphs and defects, experiences and prospects, solaces and aspirations. Not seldom it would be a doxology of rapturous homage to the power and beauty of the Redeemer. . . . Sometimes a cry of despair . . Some would wail as if the pains of death had got hold of them . . . The reader should remember that the popular mind did not recognize that the Revival, *par excellence*, had broken out in a place until religious emotion had reached this point of ebullition in open rapture.[2]

[1] De Fursac, *Un Mouvement Mystique Contemporain*; Paris: Alcan, 1907, p. 159.

[2] *The '59 Revival in Wales*, p. 19. *Cf.* Ruysbroeck: *L'ornement des Noces Spirituelles*, Book II, ch. xix "Spiritual inebriation leads to many unusual actions. Some, in the abundance of bliss, break out into canticles and sing God's praises. Others shed tears of joy. Some long to move their limbs, they cannot remain still; they must run, leap, stamp their feet, clap their hands vigorously. Others show their delight by loud cries. Others, again, find all their faculties seized to such an extent that they stand silent, and, as it were, melting with love."

What would be very beautiful in private devotion was sometimes found inconvenient in church,

It (Sion Chapel) was the religious home of the pious old Sister Jane Williams, of Bryn, commonly known as "Sian Seion." Many things are reported of "Sian's" sayings and doings. One of them appears in the Welsh Autobiography of Robyn ddu Eryri. . . Robyn states: "as I was going along the street one Saturday, Mr. Preece beckoned to me, and in my hearing asked Sian y Bryn if she did not feel chilled walking bare-footed in that snowy weather, and she replied that she did. Exacting a promise from her that she would not shout (glorify) on the following day whilst he was preaching, he bought her a pair of shoes. Sunday morning came, and I went to Sion Chapel before Mr. Preece had arrived, and took care to secure a place near Sian. Mr. Preece's text was 'Behold the Lamb of God.' He preached with much fervency, and Sian began to be ill at at ease. Presently she stooped down and took off her shoes. Then she stood up and flung the shoes at the preacher, shouting, 'Thy shoes to thee, Preece; Christ for me. Glory and praise be to Him for ever and ever."[1]

Another and more curious example of singularity:—

Another hymn was started, and suddenly a very quaint scene was witnessed. Between the big seat and the pews there was a clear space, some yards across, in most chapels in Wales at that time. A godly old woman, named Nell, eighty years old, who had failed to attend the afternoon service owing to very severe rheumatic pains in her limbs,

1 *Robert Humphreys, An Early Methodist Preacher in Wales*, by Edward Rees, J.P.; translated from the Welsh, and edited by Howel Thomas; London; Charles H. Kelly, 26 Paternoster Row, E.C., p. 70.

and had only crept painfully to the evening meeting, advanced briskly across the open space and put her hand on Enoch Davies, a lame and decrepit deacon of seventy-two, who sat in the big seat. This was high-backed and a seat ran around it outside as well as inside. As if electrified by Nell's touch, Enoch stood on his feet, and with one vault cleared the high obstacle between him and her; and the two soon joined by others, began to leap and dance as if the days of youth had returned to them . . . the subjects of these physical manifestations were frequently, indeed generally, men and women of piety and spiritual-mindedness; and when they were moved in this manner, they were swayed spontaneously, irresistibly, and often unconsciously. In one neigbourhood a respectable middle-aged lady, the sister of an eminent Welsh minister, when intensely moved by the truth in sermon or prayer or hymn, would leave her pew, walk gravely into the clear space in front of the big seat, and there she would literally fulfil the Psalmist's injunction and "praise the name of the Lord *in the dance.*" After leaping and dancing with rhythmical movements for a few minutes, she would cease and return to her pew, not one word having been uttered by her throughout the whole scene.[1]

Spiritual jubilation of this extraordinary character is far from unknown among Catholics, There is a variety of mystical religious experience known as *Ebrietas seu crapula amoris*, which we find in many of the lives of the Saints. St. Teresa on one occasion sang and danced in the excess of spiritual joy. But it was within the cloister, not in a public church.[2] This amazing physical outpouring of spiri-

[1] *The '59 Revival in Wales*, p. 27.
[2] *Minor Works of St. Teresa*, London: Baker, 1913, p. 71.

tual exultation has so characterized certain phases of mystical life, that it is recognised by Lopez Ezquerra and Scaramelli as a distinct stage, though Poulain only regards it as a variety of "the prayer of quiet,"[1] But though it is recognized as a possible effusion of the Holy Spirit, all approved authors look on these manifestations with deep suspicion and counsel the greatest self-restraint, caution, and privacy.

"Quia hae actiones praecipites possunt interdum procedere, vel a spiritu lunatico, vel ab indole, et genio facili, et hilari, vel a nimia fatuitate, vel denique (et hoc frequentius) ex hypocrisi, et simulatione, quae aliquae falsae Beatae suae virtutis quaestum portare volentes, dum superbia et avaritia tument, credi appetunt divini amoris incendio crepare." And Lopez Ezquerra concludes: "Ingenue fatemur, quod omnes insolitas, et exteriores gesticulationes, motus, jaculatiorias, suspiria, et his similia, quibus aliqui in conspectu hominum utuntur; praeter modestiam hilarem, circumspectam gravitatem et inaffectatam devotionem, immortali odio prosequimur."[2]

[1] Ezquerra, *Lucerna Mystica*, tr. 5, cap. 23; Scaramelli, *Direttorio Mistico*, tr. 3, cap. 7 and 8; Poulain, *Les Graces d'Oraison*, ch. 11 § 7 (5 me Ed.).

[2] "Since these headlong acts can sometimes proceed from a disordered mind, or a too jovial temperament, or excessive silliness, or even (and this is the more frequent case) from that hypocrisy and humbug whereby certain female traffickers in piety would like to be thought on fire with Divine love when they are swollen with pride and avarice." And Lopez Ezquerra concludes: "We candidly admit that we always abominate all unusual gestures, movements, ejaculations, sighs and suchlike in public which go beyond a modest, cheerful, grave, circumspect and unaffected form of devotion."

If the Ulster Revivalists had possessed a little of the spiritual science of this Spanish priest of the seventeenth century, they would have damped down many scandalous scenes. One of the most striking features in all these Protestant revivals is the lack of that science, " the discernment of spirits, " in nearly all the ministers concerned. " No excesses of excitement, no hypnosis, no diseased imaginings, provided they have the cloak of religion, are too extreme to be regarded by certain persons as normal and healthy."[1]

" I was myself present, " says an educated clergyman," in a Presbyterian meeting house (Belfast), at a prayer offered with the most frenzied excitement and gesticulations that God would, there and then, *descend and strike* all the unconverted *to the earth.* That prayer was accompanied throughout by a storm of cries, and groans, and exclamations, and amens, all having the true hysteric sound. This was the most frightful scene I have witnessed in life ; at the moment of the awful command to the Almighty to come down and strike, it was perfectly terrific. No such scene would be permitted in any Bedlam on earth. Presence at such a prayer could be redeemed from guilt only by the purpose of warning. I have many terrible recollections of life, but this prayer is the most frightful of them all. I have been used to be calm in the presence of hysteria. I was calm then, but the physical effect

1 Starbuck, *Psych. of Relig.*, p. 164.

upon myself was as if I had been drinking plain brandy."[1]

De Fursac, in his account of the Evan Roberts Revival, mentions[2] another phenomenon, not however confined to revivals, which presents also rather marked mystical features, somewhat akin to what Poulain calls *"la quietude priante,"*[3] or even certain forms of ecstasy, but distinguished from these forms of experience by its unconscious character. Psychologically it seems a secondary state, but without the ordinary defects of such secondary states. This is the celebrated Welsh *hwyl*. Ordinarily the word merely signifies a species of oratorical chant, but it is a psychological process as well, as the illustration De Fursac gives shows.

Several years ago, well before the Revival, a Welsh minister was preaching on the Passion of Christ. When he came to speak of the bloody sweat in the garden of Olives, he entered into an excess of *hwyl*, rose to the chanting tone which characterizes this state, and continued to preach or rather to chant in this way for ten minutes, then he regained consciousness and resumed the ordinary tone of a sermon. When the sermon was over, he remembered vaguely that the moment when he began to speak of the of the sweat of blood, he felt choked, but could not recall a word of what he had said during the *hwyl*. Those ten minutes were blotted out of his life, as it were—yet it appears that he was never more eloquent.

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1 Rev. Isaac Nelson: *The Year of Delusion*, Belfast 1861, p. 171.

2 De Fursac, op. cit., p. 170.

3 Poulain, *Les Graces d'Oraison*, chap. 14, § 23 (5 me Ed.).

De Fursac does not, of course, admit the last point in an objective sense. He looks on the eloquence as the result of the contagious character of the *hwyl*, which affects the mentality of the hearers as a species of hypnotism.

"A few minutes of *hwyl*," said a Welsh minister to me, "make a stronger impression on the soul than hours of preaching."

We are not bound to accept M. de Fursac's psychologic prejudices. He admits that the *hwyl* is a plaintive and very impressive chant, but as he did not speak Welsh he could hardly judge the intellectual and moral value of the *hwyl* he heard.

This phenomena of the *hwyl* and much of the whole spirit of Welsh Protestant piety, as shown in these revivals, remind the Catholc student of hagiography of much in the lives of the early Franciscans, even in its very extravagances. There is something amazingly Catholic about these Calvinists. The Ulster Revival is convulsionary Jansenism, morbid and repellent, but the Welsh brings us back to the days when Francis of Assissi met the bandits with the cry, "I am the the Herald of the Great King," when Brother Juniper boiled all the fowl in the larder, feathers and all, that there might be more time for the Brothers to sing the praises of the Most High, when Jacopone da Todi gave the world the *Stabat Mater*

There were two very striking non-morbid features of the Ulster Revival of '59,

I was told by the Rev. Mr. Park, of Ballymoney, on authority which he considered reliable and decisive, that in the district of Excise, of which Coleraine is the centre, comprehending a radius of perhaps ten or twelve miles by no means densely peopled, the falling off in the duty paid on spirits for the month was no less than £400 sterling.[1]

Many cases might be reported in which the persons convinced of sin, and professing to have found peace with God, have not only given up their drinking habits, but although their desire for strong drink has hitherto overpowered every resolution for improvement, since their conversion they have no appetite for the insidious draught. They are not only saved from the consequences of their sin, but the desire to commit it has also been taken away. That is one peculiar phase of this movement worth recording as a fact in Christian ethics.[2]

These conversions to physical sobriety we have heard were lasting in many cases. The other feature is no less striking, the decline in the party spirit during the revival.

I was in the town and vicinity of Belfast on the 12th of July. Never since the distinction of political partisanship stigmatized different classes of the community, was so *little* personal rancour exhibited; never was the spirit of persecution so allayed.

On the 12th of July, not so much as an offensive coloured ribbon was displayed throughout the length and breadth of Durham Street, nor, indeed, in any other locality in Ulster in which the people had become seriously impressed.[3]

[1] *Revivals in Ireland*, Parts II. and III. p. 37.

[2] Ibid. p. 40.

[3] Ibid. p. 62.

The Chief Baron Pigott referred to this general cessation of party feeling as a result of the revival in a charge at the Down Assizes.[1]

From these two effects we may form some idea of the energy of the conversion-psychose and its widespread character in Ulster.

The statistics tabulated and plotted by Starbuck have led him to regard the conversion-psychose as normally a phenomenon of adolescence and puberty ; it is not so however in these revival cases, where subjects of all ages are converted. The coincidence of religious development with physical changes like puberty, is, of course, to be expected when stress is laid on the emotional characteristics in religious experience. Analogous nerve disturbances have been observed in Catholic children at the time of First Communion, before the late Pope had lowered the age. The type of preparation usual in France was very emotional and contributed much to the large crop of cases of psychasthenia, whose originating scruples can be traced back to the preparation for First Communion.[2] But we must not take effects for causes.

Nor can we, with Freud, give undue weight to the sex-instinct in the conversion-psychose. It has its rôle in our spiritual life, as was well known to the

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[1] Ibid. p. 91.

[2] Eymieu, *Le gouvernement de soi-même : L'obsession et le scruple* ; Perrin, 1913, p. 130.

Fathers of the Desert. For the physically normal person the sex-instinct forms perhaps the greatest centre of instability in his whole psychic field. But it is philosophically absurd and morally disgusting to try to reduce all other psychic elements of an abnormal character into terms of our bestiality. Sex-obsession is even worse than sex-agnosticism in the spiritual life. You have one or the other when the rules of a sane asceticism are ignored. A little of that lore which the Catholic Church has inherited and cultivated, that codified spiritual experience of twenty centuries, would have saved these Revivals from many painful scandals. We may snub the devil and cut the world, but the flesh is always with us. "But I chastise my body, and bring it into subjection; lest, perhaps, when I have preached to others, I myself should become a cast-away" (1 Cor. ix. 27).

CHAPTER IV

INTEGRAL CONVERSION

Most, if not all, of the conversions we have been studying presuppose in the converted the existence of religious faith as a psychic element. The system of missions or retreats based on the Spiritual Exercises takes the creeds of the Church as the starting-point, to be developed and applied by meditation to the reform of life. The revivalist usually limits his dogmatic presuppositions, yet, although he regards religious faith as *fiducia* and not as *fides*, he takes as his fulcrum an idea of Sin and Redemption, both credal elements. The Revivalist and the Jesuit may differ as to what must be believed, but both assume beliefs of some sort as necessary prolegomena to their different religious exercises. The conversions they effect are rather the development and practical application of existing speculative beliefs than the formation of a new system of faith. The Catholic whom the mission brings from sin to regularity of life and religious practice may possibly be much better instructed in

the Catholic faith than he was before, but he has not acquired a new faith, he only knows more about it and practises it better. The revival convert may have gained religious fervour and perhaps some views, he may be led to study his Bible and become a member of some Church, but his essential dogmatic outlook remains much the same. The change in the religious field of consciousness in all these cases is rather a re-arrangment of existing psychic elements and their reinforcement, than the formation of new constituents. Hence there is a very great difference between these ordinary cases of conversion, whatever be their violence or eccentricity, and those where there is a passage from infidelity to Christianity or from Protestantism to Catholicity. Here the change involved is much more than a mere shaking of the psychic kaleidoscope, the new pattern has new elements in it.

De Fursac in his account of the Evan Roberts' Revival,[1] admits the conversion of certain atheists, but he seems to regard them as poseurs and notoriety-hunters. He is not at all disposed to admit the possibility of the conversion of a genuine agnostic, nor is it easy to see how he could admit it consistently with his system. Faith implies an adhesion to the unknowable, a stepping beyond the frontiers of conscious knowledge by the will, and that with a certitude

[1] De Fursac, *Un Mouvement Mystique Contemporain*, Paris, p. 77

exceeding knowledge in the firmness of its adhesion. "For he that cometh to God, must believe that He is, and is a rewarder to them that seek Him" (Hebrews xi. 6). A man must himself accept the first article of the Christian creed before he can acknowledge the possibility of a real conversion of a genuine agnostic, otherwise he must deny or explain it away as a subjective delusion or a conscious fraud. Either course is fairly easy and plausible, if you are allowed to beg the question and brush aside inconvenient testimony

We propose to confine our study of the psychic mechanism involved in an act of faith and its genesis to Catholic religious experience, as we find there the best marked psychologic types. It is *fides* not *fiducia* we are examining, and Protestant religious experience is too fluctuating in its dogmatic content to furnish suitable material. It would be difficult to include Oxford, Hereford, Cardiff, and Belfast in the same diocese. The reaction of the Protestant consciousness to dogma is varied, not merely by subjective conditions, which we are studying, but by credal variations, which are outside the field of our inquiry. By taking a uniform creed we can get rid of this source of variation and so, to some extent, simplify matters. We are studying faith as a fact of consciousness, its ultimate nature and origin belong to the sphere of theology, not psychology, We will merely take beliefs as psychic facts and examine how they affect and are affected by

the various elements which, with them, make up the field of consciousness.

Psychologically, belief is second-hand knowledge. There are many things which we hold to be true of which we have no direct experience giving immediate knowledge or inference from experience constituting scientific knowledge. We know them because someone else who knows has told us. We accept them as truths on trust. If we analysed the whole content of our knowledge we would find an act of faith at the bottom of the vast bulk of it. How much of what we know of geography have we ever personally verified; for us it will remain faith, from school-desk to grave. Between this natural and normal exercise of faith and religious faith, there is no difference as far as both are assents on another's authority. Even where the truth propounded seems improbable, if the authority is considered competent and reliable, assent follows. If A knows that B is a truthful and capable man of science, he will be willing to accept, on B's authority, any statement, however extraordinary, which B assures him he has personally verified. The only case where this natural faith would fail is when the truth enunciated by B seems to A to involve a contradiction with some known truth. But if B assures A that the contradiction is only apparent, not real, and due to A's lack of scientific training, A will still be able to believe, but with a difference. He cannot

accommodate the new proposition to his existent field of consciousness, he can accept it in itself by forgetting, that is ignoring, what contradicts it. It becomes a mystery. Before he can heartily accept it, the rough edges must be removed, and he must be shown how to fit it in with the other elements of consciousness. He must be shown some larger synthesis which can comprise the discordant ideas, although his mind may be unable to understand how. The conflict between his personal idea and B's theorem will cease when B assures him that the seeming contradiction can be reconciled in a second truth which includes both and from which both proceed. Although A may not understand how this can be, yet if he has full confidence in B's knowledge he can reconcile his consciousness to the presence of what he would otherwise regard as a contradiction. We are supposing of course, that A has some docility and is not set on maintaining his own opinions against competent authority. He will bear the seeming contradiction with facility in proportion to his docility, for he will refer its elements confidently to the higher synthesis, and this confident reference will lessen their mutual psychic pressure and friction.

Being thus enabled to keep both members of the seeming contradiction in his field of consciousness, A is enabled to make practical use of them, and thus the new truth received from B can be readily utilized. If

A could not tolerate it by reference to the higher synthesis, he would be driven by the force of his pre-existent ideas to exclude it from consciousness, or did he desire to utilize it, it would be against the grain. You cannot live a contradiction. Again, if by any chance A should lose confidence in B's knowledge, veracity, or goodwill, the whole new structure would collapse, for the grounds on which he accepted the discordant idea would disappear, the will to believe would cease. But while the will to believe remained, was A's conduct in any way unreasonable? Would it have been reasonable for him to match his wits against his teacher and say, "Because I cannot reconcile what you tell me with what I know already, it must be false?"

If, for the human teacher in this natural act of faith, we substitute a Divine Teacher, teaching men directly, the reasonableness of belief is not only assured but perfected, for where can doubt come in as to knowledge, veracity, and good-will on the side of the teacher? Yet, even here, the assent remains a voluntary act on the side of the person taught, for the truth propounded by the teacher need not be evident in itself, or as a conclusion from certain knowledge. The doctrine cannot command assent intrinsically, it can only exact assent by the moral force of authority. But who can doubt that such knowledge would exceed in certainty any mere human science?

Where such Divine teaching comes to man, not directly but through human agency, we can surely give, with every reasonableness, the same complete assent, if we are but sure that the human agency is duly recognised, commissioned, and commanded to teach in the Name and by the authority of the Divine Master. Where the Master's veracity is unquestionable and His power unquestioned, such a commission, once authenticated, is a guarantee that whatsoever is taught by those He sent "to teach all nations" is His teaching. "He that heareth you, heareth Me; and he that dispiseth you, despiseth Me. And he that despiseth Me, despiseth Him that sent Me" (Luke x. 16). "He that receiveth you, receiveth Me; and he that receiveth Me, receiveth Him that sent Me" (Matthew x. 40).

Once we recognize and acknowledge within ourselves that the Catholic Church is the duly commissioned human agency through which the Divine Teacher instructs us, we can reasonably give as cordial an assent to its teaching as we would give to the Word of God Himself speaking directly to our consciousness. An ambassador may fail to deliver an earthly monarch's message with accuracy, and we may reasonably doubt at times the King's meaning, but the "Creator of all things visible and invisible" is Lord of the very roots of being, and His Minister Plenipotentiary cannot fail to say what it is the Master's Will that he should say, no more and no less.

We are not here concerned to discuss how the Catholic verifies the credentials of the Church, that belongs to the domain of apologetics, not of psychology. We assume that these credentials are verifiable and verified, as the case may be. Our task will be to examine the various resultant assents with their corollaries as part of the given of consciousness and see how they interact with the rest of the field, how they come into being as psychic elements or pass out of consciousness, how religious faith comes and goes.

Our field of consciousness has, as we have seen, a certain visual unity. All our thoughts, images, volitions, passions, sensations tend to group themselves round some one centre of interest in each particular state of consciousness that we examine. That centre of interest forms the focus of our spontaneous attention, should it shift there is a change more or less marked in the whole field. The devout parishioner who is carefully following the Mass in his missal. brings into his field of mental view the various liturgical ideas which cluster round the Mass, the prayers and ceremonies, the chant and music it may also be. His field, in the main, is a liturgical complex, with all its multiplex doctrinal and devotional associations. The precise focus of his attention will shift as the action progresses, and so will the general field, but its general character will remain the same and it will take its colour and tone from the centre

of interest, the liturgy. Now, let some vivid distraction intrude, some vexatious reminiscences which start a train of worldly thoughts. If the original centre of attention holds firm, if the interest in the liturgy is sustained, the distractions may worry for a while near that centre, but are gradually edged off until they pass out of the field of view. But should they succeed not only in attracting but in holding our interest, then the liturgical elements drop out of consciousness, and the tone of the whole field becomes secular, the distraction has become complete. For the time being the religious field of consciousness has passed out of view and a secular field has replaced it. By an effort of conative attention we may divert the focus of our mind from the distraction and bring it back to that point of the Mass which is in progress, thus shifting back the field, but such an effort must needs be strenuous when the distracting thoughts are of much interest to us and have been allowed free play. Our sense of the duty of attentive prayer may help us to recover our mental place, just as any vivid emotion roused by the secular train of ideas may hopelessly obstruct us. The power to distract, the power to excite a devotion which is apparent in consciousness, is, psychologically speaking, the power to excite spontaneous interest. That which holds our spontaneous interest determines for the nonce the centre of our field of consciousness and its general

tone. Now, interest is not the same as delectation, for a vivid interest may well be very painful, so this determination of the field of interest is not the same as the victorious delectation of the Jansenist. Moreover, it only determines the spontaneous attention, conative attention can largely shape and alter the resultant field. Still this attraction and especially in the nascent state, is such a power in consciousness that it is a commonplace of ascetical experience that distractions, unless promptly expelled, tend to oust prayer from consciousness altogether. So effectively troublesome are they that St. Teresa considered that to acquire the habit of recollection in prayer "one must not grow tired of persevering in trying gradually to obtain the mastery over oneself. This self-denial will profit any nun by making her senses serve her soul. . . For the love of God, Sisters, reckon your time well spent in acquiring this habit. I know that, with his help, if you practise it for a year, or perhaps for only six months, you will gain it."[1] Recollection, in St. Teresa's sense, is the power to pray, not without distractions, but without being liable to be overcome by distractions. It is the acquirement of a conative attention so energetic that the religious field is kept intact and consistent amid all possible disturbances. If *her nuns* needed a year, or at least six months, of spiritual exercise to gain

[1] St. Teresa, *Way of Perfection*, chap. xxix. 6.

this power of self-concentration, how psychically energetic the distraction must be as compared with prayer ! But who that has prayed has not experiened this?

We have seen how potent is the new idea springing into consciousness. It is a change, and we are curiously avid of change. The idea effects a lodgement before we are well aware of its nature, and our spontaneous attention is hooked before the automatic attention of mere curiosity has had time to die down Once we are interested our whole field tends to shift so as to leave the new notion in the focus. If it is incompatible with a religious frame of mind there is conflict and possible rout. "No man can serve two masters," no one can rest in God with an admiring eye on the world. One interest must oust the other.

How was it, psychologically, that a distraction or temptation is able to break up a religious field of consciousness with such facility? To answer this question we must examine more closely the structure of the religious field and see wherein it differs from the secular field of consciousness. We have seen how the dynamism of the nascent idea can disturb the centres of instability in the normal consciousness; we will find both factors of change strengthened in the specifically religious consciousness. Besides those psychic elements which constitute the normal field, we have all those others which come into the cate-

gory of faith and its adjuncts. Between the latter and the former there are many sources of friction, conflicts between our passions and our religious obligations, between our scientific theories and the articles of the Creed, between our vicious propensities and our spiritual aspirations. We have a row with our parish priest and get doubts as to the infallibility of the Church. All through our mental make-up there are points of conflict. It goes against our grain to fast, to confess our sins to some priest who does not share our political veiws or whose conversation we do not relish. Countless are the possible points of friction, all tending to form possible centres of instability. The more worldly and external are our lives, the more extroverted are our proper selves, the more are these centres multiplied. The miracle is, not that the worldly Catholic loses the faith, but that he does not.

Within the specifically religious, as distinct from the general field of consciousness, there are many possibilities of centres of instability. We will take the religious field as actualized in some prayer or meditation, so as to consider it apart from the general field which it interpenetrates more or less. In any well-developed religious exercise we get a concentration of the given of faith in consciousness, we get the centre of attention, spontaneous or conative, fixed on some faith-element of consciousness seen in its appropriate setting.

The first point to remark is the extraordinary potential richness and variety in this specifically religious field. The central point of attention may be only one fact of faith, but for the Catholic no one fact of faith is ever solitary, it is linked up with every dogma and sends out fibres into every pious practice. The Catholic faith is a psychic *bloc*, it has no water-tight compartments or autonomous tracts. Our attention may shift from one fact of faith to another and our conscious field vary accordingly, but we see in the measure of our knowledge that each element is part of one great whole. Our field becomes as it were the surface of a sphere where each point, each outline is related to a centre beyond our vision, yet towards which our vision is ever tending and striving.

This variety in unity and unity in variety of the given of faith in the Catholic consciousness appear in every expression of the Catholic faith which we find in Creeds, in liturgy, in ascetics, in the *Summa* of Aquinas, in a High Mass, in *The Imitation of Christ*, in a Gothic cathedral, and in the *Divina Commedia*. The faith is one, not merely in the original deposit, but in all the developments which the Catholic mind has drawn from the facts of faith since Apostolic times. There has been an ever-increasing richness in the content of the Catholic consciousness and an ever-growing sense of unity of mind as the inter-relation of each deduction and application of dogma is per-

ceived. What is heresy but some alleged deduction from the facts of faith which the Catholic consciousness cannot assimilate and unite with its content? There is some irreducible antagonism with the given of faith or its corollaries; the collective Catholic consciousness expels the novelty, and the individual must do likewise. He may not see how the new idea conflicts with his existent field, but sooner or later it will worry it to pieces. Heresy begins in an apologetic and ends in a cataclysm. A Catholic desires to meet the objections of modern agnostics, he makes play with a doctrine of immanence and, before he knows it, he has not left one article of the Creed unshaken. Terrible is the unity of the faith in the Catholic consciousness, at once so strong and so fragile, no force can crush it, one doubt can shatter it.

This linkage of the faith-elements in consciousness which constitutes their psychologic unity, whether perceived or not, is one great source of those centres of instability in the psychic mass; the other is found in the antagonism between the natural temperament and the exigencies of faith, the passions and the duties of religion. If our dispositions to pride, to avarice, to lust, to hatred, envy, and sloth come in conflict with those duties which our faith enjoins and enacts, we have a state of conscious stress set up. Our lower self may prevail, and by prevailing grow dominant. The man to whom grave sin has become a habit, may

yet retain his faith, but its force in his consciousness, its energy in shaping his life, grow less and less. If he continues it sinks into the oblivion of the deeper memory and he becomes, for all practical purposes, as a man without faith. Yet it is there, and may be recalled by some such process as we studied in the conversion-psychose. But suppose, before this sinner's faith drops into practical oblivion, some doubt as to its validity is suggested to his mind stressed to psychic disintegration by his passions, we have all the conditions present for a violent perversion-psychose Passion is doubt's most terrible ally. Although this source of faith-failure is perhaps the more abundant, weakness is the linkages in more important from the point of view of our study, since the passion perversion-psychose depends for its crisis on a shattered linkage.

The points where the psychic elements of faith interlock are not all in the same psychic plane. We have, as it were, on the surface of our sphere of faith those facts of faith which belong to the deposit with all those moral, liturgical, devotional, and sacramental concomitants which are psychologically allied to them and accompany them into that special field which is formed when any of these facts of faith are focussed by our attention, spontaneous or conative. Behind this surface of the sphere lies the whole region of theological and ascetical deduction and

inference, with their developments. It is in this region that we find the wider synthesis which enables us to mentally connect the seemingly disparate elements on the surface of our sphere. Here we resolve the doubts which might wreck the surface linkage, and see the reasonableness of the apparently irrational. Again, from the conclusions of theology we direct and govern external action, and from the principles which that science abstracts from the facts of faith, we get a clearer and more vivid knowledge of these facts. *Credo ut intelligam.* If we fail to accommodate the conclusions of theology with the facts of faith, we have at once a centre of instability formed. If we adhere to our conclusions we must reject or modify the fact, unless we can refer both fact and conclusion to a still higher synthesis. If this reference cannot be made and we still adhere to our inference, we are forced to choose between the facts of faith which we accept and those which we reject. Should we make this choice, we are heretics (*αἵρεσις* = choice). We have rent the seamless garment of the given of faith.

If we take any historic heresy we will find the heresiarch started as a Catholic of exceptional orthodoxy. Some aspects in the facts of faith impressed him vividly and he drew from them some too absolute conclusion. He formulated and preached this in season and out of season, until some one pointed out that his doctrine

was in conflict with some other fact of faith. Put to the choice the heresiarch adheres to his view and challenges the opposing fact of faith. His opponents denounce his doctrine as heresy, and if it is not wholly irreconcilable reduce the peccant formula to one which retains the truth and does not conflict with other facts of youth. Thus does a new definition come into being and faith is developed by the correction of heresy.

So, too, is the given of faith developed by the discussions in the schools of theology, and conclusions from the facts of faith connected and inter-related. In everyday meditation the same process takes place consciously or unconsciously, and the Catholic mind tries to understand more and more the facts of faith and apply them to daily life. The analytical factor in our consciousness selects certain aspects from the concrete given of faith and collates these aspects with the content, religious and secular, of consciousness. We analyse and compare these abstract views and refer our results to the original facts of faith or to others. Our abstractions may conflict with our secular knowledge, we must correct one or the other, or seek a higher unifying synthesis. If we fail we have a centre of instability formed. A physical theory may raise doubts as to the nature of the Eucharist, a system of metaphysics may destroy the whole creed. Thus at every period of abstraction

at every stage of psychic depth we have possibilities of a failure of some linkage, of the creation of some centre of instability.

Philosophical analysis may readily render unacceptable what was acceptable in the concrete form by releasing some aspect in consciousness incompatible with existing knowledge. The study of theology has its dangers as well as its consolations. How many students of theology have had their simple faith wrecked by a view of certain aspects of dogma for which they were not yet intellectually equipped? A simple error in values, a failure to grasp the answer to a difficulty, and you have both centre of instability and nascent idea. The objection comes as a surprise and as an irritant, and will take hold before the victim has received sufficient instruction to cope with it effectively. And what may happen in authorized study, may more readily come to pass in the course of desultory reading. The medical or arts student is still less equipped to deal with an objection a shade beyond his fighting weight, and the man in the street is quite helpless.

What tends to destroy faith in the Catholic, forms an obstacle to its entrance into the non-Catholic consciousness. The unbeliever may be vehemently attracted by certain aspects of the faith, by its moral grandeur and beauty, by its influence on the lives of those who profess it, by its overflow in liturgy

and art, by its consistency and uniformity. He may be even drawn by a sense of personal want, of incompleteness, of a desired ideal beyond his personal capacity, and he may feel that the Catholic Church can give him what he lacks, that "faith will make him whole." Yet he cannot equate the doctrines of the Church with his scientific prejudices ; he has the will-to-believe, yet he cannot. Though faith is so morally desirable, yet its reception would lead to the collapse of his scientific cosmos. From the facts of experience he has abstracted a system of determinism, physical and psychic, which leaves no room for the miraculous or supernatural. A miracle is an irritating phenomenon which he cannot explain. Could he witnes one he would deny the evidence of his senses, rather than admit that his fixed idea was too absolute, his generalization too sweepingly dogmatic. We see this attitude of mind again and again at Lourdes. The philosophical system beats back the facts of experience from consciousness and forbids them to effect a lodgment.[1] Some are in bad faith, "le miracle est le coup de glas des passions terrestres," as Huysmans puts it ; others are simply fenced by the triple brass of determinism. Behind all their minds is the tacit rejection of the first article of the Nicene Creed. They substitute determinism for the idea of a Creator. " He who would come to God must first believe that He is."

[1] Cf. *Les Foules de Lourdes* of J. K. Huysmans.

The essential reasonableness of any act of Catholic faith rests on the fundamental acknowledgment of a Divine Teacher whose authentic message is duly conveyed and interpreted by His authorized agents duly commissioned and certified by Him. "He that heareth you, heareth Me." Without that basic primal assent no act of faith in the Catholic sense is possible. We may cling with the utmost obstinacy to any article of the creed we will, it will be only a *view* at best, if we do not hold it on the authority of God Himself.

If we reject one jot or tittle of the Teacher's message, our belief in what is left becomes but a view, for we arrogate to ourselves the right to pick and choose among the things He teaches. It is all or nothing. If we challenge the agent, we challenge the Principal. "He that despiseth you, despiseth Me." One act of infidelity changes the whole orientation of the religious consciousness, faith becomes opinion.[1]

But, given this basis, how can we account psychologically for the fragility of faith, for the difficulty of belief, for the facility with which it goes, the reluctance with which it comes? If there is the will, nay, the desire to believe, if habits of vice present no obstacles, if there is a moral docility, how can we, as students of psychology, account for the *Non Serviam* of the intellect in so many cases? Assent on competent

[1] *Summa Theologica*, D. Thomae Aquinatis, IIa, IIae, Q. 5 a. 3.

authority to what is beyond our mental grasp is so eminently reasonable, that the "I cannot believe" of the man of good-will is an act of unreason. Yet there are many agnostics of blameless life and character, who are drawn to Catholicism in many ways, who realize in themselves a craving for what is beyond themselves, who feel that the Church holds the keys of eternal life, the reconciliation of the storm-tossed human consciousness with itself and its Centre, that peace which was promised on that first Christmas night to men of good-will, who see in the lives of the saints, perhaps in some friend, the pragmatic authentication of the Church's mission, integral Catholicism in human life with its dreadful moral beauty, its triumphant challenge to all that men esteem and covet in the things of time, who see the might of Faith in history creating those supermen and superwomen whom Catholics call saints, taming and civilizing the fiercest barbarians and hammering them into mighty nations, giving to art and letters a beauty undreamt of in Athens, and linking the whole human race in one vast family, who yet see and feel all this, but cannot believe. They will even admit that they ought to believe if they could. How comes this psychic inability? Belief is reasonable and desirable, why is it witheld? They will answer, "I have not faith." There is some ingredient lacking, some force which can condense the nebula of opinion into the habitable world of faith. Their assent

to the basic *sine qua non* of Catholic faith is a notional assent, genuine enough, but abstract, a philosophical attitude, a morally passive pose before the undeniable. It is not a real assent, actuating and energizing the whole consciousness, forming in the very centre of mental life that higher synthesis to which all seeming contradictions can be referred and in which they can be reconciled. No mere reasoned assent can do this effectively, for no stream can rise above its source. The affirmations of reason cannot escape the challenge of reason. To get this basic assent we must pass above reason; to make our rational assent universally operative it needs an adjutant psychic element, something not ours, but given to us. "Quis ostendit nobis bona? Signatum est super nos lumen vultus tui Domine" (Psalm iv. 6, 7).

We can thus see the necessity for the terms italicized in the following theological definition: "Fidei actus est assensus *supernaturalis* quo intellectus, sub imperio voluntatis *et influxu gratiae*, firmiter adhaeret veritatibus revelatis propter auctoritatem Dei revelantis"[1]

Omit these terms and we have still an act of faith, but of natural human faith, *la foi scientifique*, as Père

[1] *Brevior Synopsis Theol. Dogm. auct.* Ad. Tanquerey, 1913, p. 135. "An act of Faith is a *supernatural* assent by which the intellect by command of the will and *under the influence of Grace* firmly adheres to revealed truths on the authority of God revealing them."

A. Gardeil terms it. [1] Between this natural faith and the faith specified in the definition there is a great theological gulf fixed. But is there a psychological difference, can we distinguish by the introspection of our consciousness during any act of faith between these two kinds of faith, can we detect the adjuvant psychic element or note its absence? The agnostic of good will is sure it is absent in his case, and the believer is confident of its presence. With both it is an inference, not a direct psychic perception. The one cannot elicit an assent, the other feels that his assent transcends his natural powers in its absolute sense of certitude and indefectibility. From the act or its absence they infer the presence or absence of the habit or proximate principle of action.[2] A man knows he has faith when he believes. But can he tell, otherwise than by inference, that his act of faith is supernatural, *sub influxu gratiae*? St. Thomas answers our question both as theologian and psychologist. Speaking of the conjectural knowledge of grace, he adds: "Secundum quem modum potest intelligi quod habetur Apocal. 2: *Vincenti dabo manna absconditum quod nemo novit, nisi qui accipit*; quia scilicet ille, qui accipit gratiam per quamdam experientiam dulcedinis novit, quam non experitur ille, qui non accipit. Ista

[1] R. P. A. Gardiel, *La crédibilité et l'Apologétique*. Paris: Lecoffre, 1912, p. 38.

[2] *Summa Theologica*, D. Thomae, I, Q. 87 a. 2 ad primum et corpus articuli.

tamen cognitio imperfecta est: unde Apostolus dicit 1, ad Cor. 4: *Nihil mihi conscius sum, sed non in hoc justificatus sum*: quia ut dicitur in Ps. 18: *Delicta quis intelligit? ab occultis,*"[1] etc.

The inference we would desire to draw from this statement, which, of course, in the main refers to charity, not faith, is that the influx of grace may well cause such a psychic overflow, may have such a marked repercussion in our consciousness as to give a quasi-intuition of what is essentially beyond the range of our mental vision. In any *intense* act of supernatural faith we get something more than a mere mental assent to some truth, however firm, we get a quasi-intuition of the truth itself. Our consciousness, as it were, stretches out beyond its borders into the super-conscious, and we get a real though dim and confused glimpse of the Beyond. Here is the borderland between the ordinary way in the spiritual life of Catholics and the paths of mystical experience. The more intense the act of faith the more experimentally evident becomes the psychic adjuvant and the more marked the distinction from any act of merely human confidence;

1 *Summa* Ia. IIae. Q. 112, a. 5 c. " In this manner may be understood what we find in Apocalypse c. 2: *To him that overcometh I will give the hidden manna which no man knoweth but he that receiveth it*; namely that he who receives grace is aware of it through a certain experience of sweetness which he who has not received it lacks. That knowledge however is imperfect; hence the Apostle says in I Cor. 4: *For I am not conscious to myself of anything, yet am I not hereby justified*: since as is said in Ps. 18: *Who can understand sins? From my secret ones*, etc."

the feebler it becomes the less is it differentiated, and perfunctory formalism is psychologically indistinguishable. No one can read the writings of St. John of the Cross, of St. Teresa, of Blessed Angela of Foligno or any other descriptive mystic without seeing that for them faith is something more than a mere intellectual assent to revealed truth, it has something of the nature of vision, " in a glass darkly," but vision all the same. It is the seed which fell upon the good soil, ripe for the harvest.

It is not easy to reduce the act of faith of the devout Irish Catholic in the Real Presence to the limits of a mere firm assent to a truth learned in the penny Catechism. It contains in it something of a dim vision of Transcendant Reality and rises, at times, to be a sixth and spiritual sense.

The girl of whom we have spoken, rose early every morning to hear Mass and receive Holy Communion. On one occasion she rose and dressed at the usual hour, but, either because she did not feel well, or because she did not consider it prudent to leave the little patient alone, she did not go the chapel, but remained in the kitchen of the cottage. When she returned to Nellie, she was astonished to hear her say: " You did not get Holy God to-day; I'll tell Mudder on you." The girl thought that perhaps the child had heard her moving about in the kitchen. Accordingly, next time an idea occurred to her to test little Nellie. She went to the door of the Cottage, opened the latch, and closed the door again, thus giving the impression, as she thought, that she had really gone to Mass.

She then removed her boots, and during Mass time moved about as little as possible in the kitchen. She looked quite unconcerned when she returned to Nellie's room. The child, however, fixed her pensive eyes on the girl's countenance, and then the same reproving words were spoken sadly; "You did not get Holy God to-day." "How do you know, lovey," said the girl, "didn't you hear me close the door?" "No matter," said the child, "I know you didn't get Holy God."[1]

The Venerable Anne de Jesus, St. Teresa's companion and lieutenant, visiting one day a parish church, insisted that the Blessed Sacrament was not reserved. The parish priest declared it was, but on her continued protest, he opened the Tabernacle, and then discovered that owing to his neglect, the Sacred Species had become corrupted.

We have given these two cases of abnormal recognition of external reality to show that in certain extraordinary cases, the act of faith is transcendant as well as immanent, it has the element of vision. The faith of the Carmelite nun, of the little sick child; went out in its fullness to an external Reality, but it could not find this Reality. This class of experience, of course, belongs to the mystical order, but it is, nevertheless, an experience of faith. These abnormal cases enable us to see in quasi-isolation certain psychic elements latent in the ordinary processes, and thus

[1] *Little Nellie of Holy God*: Story of the Life of a saintly Irish Child, by a Priest of the Diocese of Cork. Cork: Guy & Co., 1913, p. 23.

have a certain value for the psychologist. In normal psychology, these limit cases are usually morbid, and Ribot justifies their consideration. "La maladie est en effet une experimentation de l'ordre le plus subtil, instutuée par la nature elle même dans des circonstances bien déterminées et avec des procédés dont l'art humain ne dispose pas: elle atteint l'inaccessible."[1] In religious psychology we find a similarly useful class of cases in the records of mystical experience. There we find the act of faith at its extreme intensity, and can see, as it were, the reflection in consciousness of other psychic elements than those normally attainable by introspection.

This dim quasi-intuition in an intense act of faith seems to point to the existence of a psychic region normally beyond consciousness, yet, in certain privileged cases, dimly penetrable by consciousness. This is the *ground* or *depth* of Tauler, the *apex mentis* of Blosius, the *fine point de l'esprit* of St. Frances de Sales, the *intelligentia* of Blessed Albertus Magnus—the names vary for this ultra-violet region of mental vision. St. Paul would seem to refer to it in 1 Thessalonians (v. 23) and Hebrews (iv. 12), where the distinction of *πνεῦμα*, *ψυχὴ* and *σῶμα* is rather psychological than ontological. Body, soul and spirit are aspects of the whole man rather than physical con-

[1] Quoted in De la Vaissière, *Elements de Psych. Exp.*, p. 27. See also James, *Varieties of Religious Experience*, p. 22.

stituents. The division of soul and spirit is a well-known mystical experience in the prayer of quiet.[1]

If we posit, then, the existence in this supra-conscious region of a metanoetic element, constituting part of the given of faith, and forming in itself that higher synthesis to which all seeming contradictions in the facts of faith can be referred, and in which they can all be reconciled, we have an adequate cause, given, of course, the will-to-believe, for that absolute unity and consistency of belief, for that unalterable firmness of adhesion, for that sense of indefectible certitude, which are the psychological notes of Catholic faith. As psychologists, we claim to infer its existence from the facts of experience, from the normal phenomena of Catholic spiritual life, and from the more recondite experience recorded by great descriptive mystics like St. Teresa. We are but doing in psychology what Adams and Leverrier did in astronomy, infer the nature and position of the invisible from the perturbations observed in the visible.

We are not here considering the possible reinforcement of the will-to-believe by some higher principle as it does not affect the *psychological* character of the act of faith. The supernaturalization of the voluntary factor in faith is, of course, of the first importance from the point of view of the theologian, the influx of grace affecting the whole act, as it is the product

[1] Cf. St. Teresa, *Interior Castle*, IV, chap. i. 8, etc.

of intelligence and will, but it does not concern the psychologist to any such extent. "Cum autem fides sit perfectio intellectus, illud per se ad fidem pertinet, quod pertinet ad intellectum; quod autem pertinet ad voluntatem, non per se pertinet ad fidem; ita quod per hoc fidei habitus possi diversificari; distinctio autem fidei formatae, et informis est secundum id, quod pertinet ad voluntatem, idest secundum charitatem, non autem secundum illud, quod pertinent ad intellectum; unde fides formata, et informis non sunt diversi habitus."[1] Thus, in the *actus fidei informis*, we must look for its specific character, as we have done, on the intellectual rather than on the voluntary side, otherwise it is very difficult to see any psychological distinction between an act of Catholic faith, and an act of purely natural or "scientific" faith. In the *actus fidei formatae*, the supernaturalization of the will-to-believe by charity may have some interest for the psychologist studying certain mystical experiences; but we must remember, charity is ever more hidden than faith. "Omnia haec tractavi in corde meo, ut curiose intelligerem; sunt justi atque sapientes et

[1] *Summa Theologica*, D. Thomae, IIa, IIae, Q. 4 a. 4 c. ad finem.
"Since faith is a perfection of the understanding, that of itself pertains to faith which pertains to understanding, but what pertains to the will does not of itself pertain to faith so that by it the habit of faith could become a different habit: but the distinction of formed and formless faith lies in what pertains to will, namely charity, and not in that which pertains to understanding: hence formed and formless faith are not different habits."

opera eorum in manu Dei: et tamen nescit homo utrum amore an odio dignus sit" (Ecclesiastes ix. 1).[1]

We can see in the classic instance of Theodore Jouffroy that the will-to-believe cannot save the psychic sphere of faith from total collapse. We have his own account of the crisis of his perversion-psychose:

I will never forget that December night when the veil was rent which concealed my unbelief from my own self. I can still hear my steps in that small unfurnished room when, long after bedtime, I used to walk up and down; I can still see that moon shining through the clouds on to its floor. The night hours passed unnoticed by me; I was anxiously pursuing the train of thought which passed from level to level to the very depths of my consciousness, clearing away, one after another, the illusions which hid it from me until that moment, making all its details clearer at every instant. Vainly I clung to those last beliefs as to a plank in shipwreck; vainly, in terror at the unknown void beneath, I flung myself for the last time with them on my childhood, my family, the place where I was born and bred, on all that was holy and dear to me; the current of thought was too strong to be diverted; I had to abandon all, parents, family, memories, beliefs; the search proceeded with greater obstinacy and severity as it approached the goal and ceased only when it reached it. . . . I was an unbeliever, but I hated unbelief; it that which decided the bent of my life Unable to endure doubt on the riddle of human destiny,

[1] "All these things have I considered in my heart, that I might carefully understand them. There are just men and wise men, and their works are in the hands of God; and yet man knoweth not whether he be worthy of love or hatred."

having no longer the light of faith to solve it, only the lights of reason were left for the problem.[1]

We see here a crisis, sudden, overwhelming, total, yet with the will-to-believe persisting in a measure after doubt had made a total wreck of the mass of interlocked assents which formed the psychic sphere of faith. A will-to-believe in general as in this case, is not necessarily a will-to-believe in each particular instance, were it so of course the doubt might be repelled and faith remain intact. The case is instructive as showing that where the general will-to-believe is not applied to all, where it fails in but one, there collapse of the whole is possible. But the destructive act, that which nips off the tail of the Rupert's drop, is an act of the intellect; "dissentire autem, qui est proprius actus infidelitatis, est actus intellectus, sed moti a voluntate, sicut et assentire."[2]

We have now to trace out, as far as we are able, the general outlines of the psychic process involved in a conversion to the Catholic faith. We can only take the very broadest outlines, for the cases present such a vast variety of types, that it is impossible to regard any one as *the* type. We have every shade of view, from agnosticism to ultra-Anglicanism, as the intel-

[1] Jouffroy, *Nouveaux Mélanges Philosophiques*, p. 114, quoted in article on Jouffroy in the *Dict. des Sciences Philosophiques*, Hachette, 1885, p. 828.

[2] *Summa*, IIa, IIae, Q. 10 a. 2 c. "but dissent, which is the proper act of unbelief, is an act of the understanding, but moved by the will, as is assent."

lectual *terminus a quo*, we have every mode, from the slow tentative steps of a Newman to the conversion "on the road to Damascus" of Alphonsus Ratisbonne and Mother Digby; we have all sorts and conditions of men, from hardened sinner to blameless respectability.

We are not concerned here with conversions involving a moral rather than a doctrinal change, as we have already dealt with the psychological aspects of such transformations. The "road to Damascus" type of conversion to the Catholic faith, as exemplified in the conversion of Père Ratisbonne, or Mother Digby, or the case related by Huysmans in *Les Foules de Lourdes*, where an infidel was not only cured, but converted in the same moment, exhibits such manifest abnormalities as to baffle any psychological explanation which respects the integral fact. De Fursac, who would equate such conversions to the Evan Roberts' Revival type, dismisses the Ratisbonne case in a footnote: "Alphonse Ratisbonne, a Jew, converted to Catholicism in a manner absolutely instantaneous (in appearance at least) in the Church of St. André delle Fratte at Rome. The conversion was accompanied by a visual hallucination. There is an account of this event in the little book of the Baron Bussierre; *The Child of Mary—One Brother more*. It has been reproduced by M. Frank Abauzit in his translation of W. James' book." The weak point in

this psychologic assimilation is not so much the denial of the miraculous, or its reduction to hallucination, that is an *a priori* necessity of thought for the agnostic, but the equation of the result of the crisis, the creation of the psychic sphere of Catholic faith, a new mentality, a new intellectuality, with merely personal moral changes, however great and impressive, which do not involve a new intellectual attitude to God and His Church. Unless we are prepared to regard the Catholic faith as a permanent hallucination, a form of chronic mental disease, we cannot bring its sudden genesis as a complete and enduring psychic factor in every circumstance of life within the categories of agnostic psychology. We may reform our morals by well-directed efforts; we may modify our views by study within limits; but we cannot take a new global attitude towards integral truth—our assent cannot be coerced. If we conclude that a dogma is contrary to *our* reason, how can we possibly accept it gladly save in the light of a reason higher than our own, in which we can implicitly trust? If this attitude of absolute confidence comes suddenly, against the grain of all past experience—comes with crushing force, sweeping into oblivion past convictions to the contrary—we must either recognize it as the finger of God, or take refuge in pure medical materialism.

The more gradual forms of conversion will suit our purpose as psychologists better than these rare and

extraordinary types; yet, their study is not free from difficulties. The material at our disposal, biography, letters and diaries, narratives of spiritual experience, though most ample, often fails to give us those psychological details which we require. Narratives are often written long after the events take place, and allowance has to be made for the present prepossessions of the writers when reviewing their own past. Very few have St. Teresa's clarity of internal vision and power of expressing the finer shades of psychic experience. Most of the documents available need to be examined and classified from the standpoint of psychology, and there is an immense field here, practically untilled, for students of positive psychology. Spiritual biography, on its ascetical side, has been well dealt with, but very little has been done, apart from mystical theology, to study the operations of the human soul as revealed in Catholic spiritual narratives. The positive study of the conversion-psychose among non-Catholics is much ahead of the positive psychology of Catholic conversions, as has been well pointed out by Père Mainage in his *Introduction à la Psychologie des Convertis.*[1]

We have two processes in these gradual conversions, the putting off of the old man by the break-up of the old convictions, and the putting on of the new by the

[1] Paris: Lecoffre, 1913, p. 7. In his subsequent volumes, *La Psychologie de la Conversion* and *Le Témoignage des Apostats*, Père Mainage has done much to supply this deficiency. Père Huby's *La Conversion* may also be consulted with profit.

formation of the new psychic sphere of faith. There is a disintegration and reintegration of the field of consciousness, but there is a new element in the reformed field. The break-up may come from some nascent idea, some intellectual difficulty which finds an appropriate centre of instability. Retté's agnosticism was first disturbed by his being asked by some Socialist comrades : " You see, citizen, we know there is no good God ; that's understood. Since the world has not been created, we want to know how everything began. Science must know all about it, and we want you to tell us clearly what it says we are to think about the matter."[1] He confesses he had no answer ready for the workmen, and was honest enough to own up. His inability set him thinking, and started the process of religious conversion. The Gorham judgment, the Jerusalem bishopric, Kikuyu, have done so for others. A doubt, when incarnated in some concrete practical question, becomes the dynamic nascent idea par excellence. A merely speculative question can be logically turned and absorbed, but the inquisitive fact not being a mere mental product, must be either met or relegated to the oblivion of deep memory. So long as it keeps near the surface of consciousness, it is a disintegrant. If it effects a break-up, more or less, of the religious or irreligious field, the elements will strive to rearrange themselves. Now, in cases of

[1] Adolphe Retté, *Du Diable à Dieu*. Paris : Messein, 1912, p. 10

conversion to the Catholic Faith, this rearrangement presents certain characteristics. The elements will try to group themselves in various manners tentatively, yet with a certain *felt* orientation. Retté thus analyses his state of soul, following on the question he could not answer :—

I was more than a hundred leagues from any thought of religion the day before : indeed, it was part of my day's work to furbish up arms against the Church. But from the moment the idea of God was thrust upon me, it never left me. Quietly, with irresistible gentleness, it penetrated and soaked me little by little. It was as if a spring gushed up in the subsoil of a desert, flooding every layer and but slowly coming to the surface into the sun.

I felt my soul, as it were, split in two ; all the forces of reason and will strove to react against this invasion of my soul by some unknown feeling whose persistence upset me. Often I felt vexed. At other times I was seized with a sort of panic, for I feared I was the victim of some morbid obsession which was symptomatic of mental breakdown.

But that did not last : I was soon obliged to recognize that, far from growing weak, my mind had never been so clear in analysing those phenomena of which the mind was the theatre. As to the worry and vexation caused by the movements of grace, they soon vanished in the divine light which progressively illuminated every corner of my being.[1]

Retté traces the progress of this work, until there is

[1] Retté, *Notes sur la Psychologie de la Conversion.* Action Catholique, Bruxelles (Science et Foi, No. 11), p. 18.

a total wreck of his old philosophical position, and he is forced back on God. Then the process of reconstruction begins, the building up of the Catholic faith against the assaults of the ideas overthrown in the destructive period of the crisis, aided by all the passions which the nascent faith would restrain. He has to learn what the Church teaches, and put in practice what it enjoins against all his old habits of mind. In that battle, which was far fiercer than the former:

> We feel in a manner very clear but undefinable, that God watches within us, and having begun our transformation He will not abandon us in the heat of our conflict with the Prince of Darkness. So we feel the seed of redemption growing which His Infinite Mercy has sown in our soul. At length we make this discovery: every time we stand firm against our passions, every time we answer the Devil with this affirmation drawn from our inmost being, "I believe and I cannot disbelieve," we are rewarded with fresh energy to resist the worst assaults, and by a feeling of love for God which floods us with joy and light—which leads us to prayer.[1]

This conflict continues with various incidents until the faith is fully formed, and put in practice. The work of reconstruction in Retté's case was not easy he was almost driven to suicide by temptations to despair. But throughout he had the consciousness of free choice.

> During every phase one keeps one's free will, and one

[1] Ibid. p. 22.

never ceases to feel clearly that it is a question of choosing between error on the decline but still vigorous and growing truth.

That is, I think, what proves the inanity of determinism. If we accept it the stronger natural motive will always prevail and every man will obey it. This motive, in the case of the convert, is that which is imposed by his life, spent in following materialist doctrines, and as a man soaked in sensuality. Yet, on the contrary, under the influence of a force acting against all the ordinary laws of psychology, he enters on a path of ransom and reparation which neither his inveterate habits nor his immediate interest pointed out.[1]

In the case of J.K. Huysmans, for the Durtal of *En Route* is evidently the author himself, the process of destruction and edification was less dramatized in consciousness, the vital change came imperceptibly.

I had heard of a sudden and violent upset of the soul, of the thunder-bolt, or of Faith finally blowing up fortifications which had been slowly and carefully undermined It is very clear that conversions can follow one or other of these ways, for God does as He wills. But there should be a third way, no doubt the more common, which the Saviour followed in my case. And that consisted in I know not what, something like digestion, which we do not feel. There is no road to Damascus, no events precipitating a crisis ; nothing happens, and you awake some fine morning to a fact without knowing the how or the why. Yes, this operation on the whole is like the mine which explodes only after being deeply dug out. Well, no, for

[1] Ibid. p. 32

in that case the work is felt ; the objections which blocked the way are cleared off, I would have been able to reason the matter out, to follow the course of the spark along the train of powder, it was not so with me. I blew up suddenly without foreseeing it, without suspecting that I had been so skilfully mined. Nor was it a thunder-bolt,unless I acknowledge some thunderbolt which is secret and silent, queer and gentle. And this would also be false, for a sudden upset of the soul comes almost always as a sequel to misfortune or crime, to something one knows. The only thing which seems certain is, that in my case there was a divine initiative, grace. . . .

As Père Mainage sums it up :

We will see that the consciousness of the convert exhibits a strange dualism : one would think it was at the mercy of a force at once external and immanent. And this force is neither brutal nor unintelligent. It acts as if proceeding from a skilful teacher, thoroughly acquainted with its psychological and moral field of action. To such an extent is this, that conversions can be reduced to a certain type of phenomena, to a case of education, with this curious difference, that the educator does not show himself. And who, then, is this mysterious teacher ? A comparison of experience with the given of Catholic doctrine will reveal His Name : God Himself present in the consciousness of the convert.[1]

Hallucination of the sub-conscious ? The objection might hold for those who only look at the dramatic

[1] Th. Mainage, O.P. : *Introduction à la Psychologie des Convertis.* Paris : Lecoffre, 1913, p. 122. This thesis is developed with much wealth of illustration by Père Mainage in *La Psychologie de la Conversion.* Paris, Beauchesne, 1915

expression of this inner experience in the narratives of converts. To convey an idea we must use some image, a coarse streak of chalk stands for the physically inexpressible Euclidean line. The more abstract our ideas, the more remote from mere concrete sensible reality, the more symbolic, the less actual is their representation in speech. As St. Thomas puts it: "Sacra Scriptura non proponit nobis divina sub figuris sensibilibus ut intellectus noster ibi maneat sed ut ab his ad invisibilia ascendat: unde etiam per vilium rerum figuris tradit, ut minor praebeatur in talibus occasio remanendi."[1] The possibility of hallucination in any dramatization of our states of consciousness is not ignored by Catholic spiritual writers; the reader will find in Chapter xxix of *The Ascent of Carmel*, of St. John of the Cross, some very appropriate criticisms of indiscreet credulity. Our imaginations may play the fool when we try to represent an experience, but we have other tests for the experience itself. How is it lived? Is that sense of unity in totality, of indefectible certitude hallucinatory? If so, the Catholic Church is one vast mad-house, for the convert's faith new formed is but the faith of

[1] D. Thomae Aquinatis, Opusc xxxiv. *In Boetium De Trin.*, Q. 6 a. 2 ad 1. "Holy Writ does not set Divine truth before us in images of sensible things that our minds might rest on them, but rather rise from them to things invisible; it is conveyed to us even in unworthy figures that we might have less excuse for dwelling on them."

all. His sense of a Divine teacher is but the dramatization, as it were, of that gift of the higher synthesis—that new metanoetic element in consciousness, whereby all his difficulties are solved. The psychic nebula of his consciousness has found its nucleus, the new centre of his psychic cosmos. "Terra autem erat inanis et vacua, et tenebrae erant super faciem abyssi: et Spiritus Dei ferebatur super aquas. Dixitque Deus: Fiat lux. Et facta est lux." (Genesis 1, 2, 3).

PART II

INTROVERSION

CHAPTER I

MYSTICAL EXPERIENCE AND QUIETISM

Those types of religious experience called mystical have attracted the attention of agnostic psychologists almost to the same extent as the phenomena displayed in the conversion-psychose. In America the latter secures the lion's share of interest, but in Europe, particularly in France, mystical phenomena invite more curiosity. Science is very jealous of the extraordinary . In the good old early Victorian days the marv llous could be brushed aside as futile and irrelevant, the miraculous was discredited, and Hell dismissed with costs. But as the world grew older and mechanism failed to solve the riddle of the universe, Science, with a capital S, dropped her easy negations and sought to annex the marvellous by explaining it. The hypothesis of the sub-conscious was invented

and the mystic was catalogued and cross-indexed. One of the beauties of the new method was that it enabled the agnostic to attack religion politely; to reduce its mysteries to psychic phenomena, essentially akin to the morbid, yet differentiated from disease by lofty moral sentiment and practical results, and by this reduction to at once praise a St. Teresa and hint at her resemblance to a neurotic patient. This change of attitude towards the mystical reveals an uneasy conscience. The earlier negations came from a more self-reliant generation; but the grandchildren of Podsnap seem to have lost his capacity for brushing aside unwelcome facts. They seem attracted, but puzzled and repelled by the marvellous; they cannot believe, they won't deny, so they try to explain.

What precisely are we to understand by the term "mystical," as applied to religious experience? The word itself has received many definitions;[1] varying according to the systems of philosophy and religious belief professed by their framers. To some all religious experience is mystical, and to others only some sort of intuition of the Divinity itself, something manifestly and patently supernatural. The first sense is

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[1] The curious in this matter may consult, with advantage, Pacheu *Introduction à la Psychologie des Mystiques* (Paris: Oudin, 1901). W. K. Fleming, *Mysticism in Christianity* (London: Scott, 1913) pp. 3 et seq.; Dean Inge, *Christian Mysticism*, Appendix A.

far too wide, since it would cover our whole field of investigation, the second too narrow, as it would exclude a very large group of phenomena recognised by competent authorities as genuinely mystical.[1] We must find a sense more comprehensive, yet sufficiently defined to enable us to discriminate between the various derivatives of the *Spiritual Exercises* of St. Ignatius, such as Rodriguez's *Christian Perfection*, and what is described in the sermons of Tauler and the works of St. Teresa and St. John of the Cross. The most ordinary reader can see that there is a great psychic difference between these two classes of spiritual phenomena. How can we distinguish one from the other, not as theologians or directors, but simply as psychologists?

Now, psychologically speaking, religious experience is concerned with the Beyond; it is the effort of the human soul to reach out to God, to unite with Him as its last end, to seek to know and to love Him, and in that knowledge and love to be made one with Him. This is not merely a fact of Revelation for the Catholic, but is a clamant need, felt dimly and persistently in the soul itself. "Thou awakest us to delight in Thy praise; for Thou madest us for Thyself, and our heart is restless, until it repose in Thee."[2] The soul of man is goaded on to the quest of the

[1] The Dark Night of St. John of the Cross, for example.

[2] St. Augustine, *Confessions*, Book i. chap. i.

Absolute by an ever growing sense of incompleteness, of want. At times he deems himself self-sufficient and the Vision of the Grail fades until the scourge of God, coming in the shape of disease or calamity, breaks his self-conceit and drives him forth again to seek a sufficiency beyond himself. Religion, as distinct from superstition, is grounded on our sense of need, is based on humility. In religion the soul seeks the Beyond of knowledge, the Ultimate of love, the All That is beyond its grasp. In the course of this quest it attains to much that is beyond its capacity of knowing and loving, it touches the Beyond of consciousness.

This Beyond of consciousness may be reached either as a something to be mentally considered and discussed, a reality beyond ourselves yet related to ourselves, a something mentally without, about which we can frame propositions and to which we can direct affections, with which we can enter into relations; or as a reality without, yet within, our consciousness. We may be aware of God's existence as a philosophical conclusion or an article of faith; it may be for us a notion more or less vivid in consciousness, more or less firmly held, more or less influential in shaping our resolutions and dominating our morals; or we may have that sense of God, that instinct of Divine Reality, that "presence of God felt" to use Père Poulain's phrase, which makes the facts of faith more

real than those of sense and gives to belief some of the dynamic qualities of vision. God may be known and loved through the medium of images, notions, concepts, through all that goes to make up the normal field of religious consciousness, or he may be known and loved, in addition, by some direct psychic process, *sine intermedio*, as the older mystics put it, by a direct psychic realisation of the Divine. It is religious experience of this type, a quasi-intuition of the Divine, which we propose to consider as "mystical" for the purposes of this study. The sense of experimental realisation forms the characteristic which distinguishes, for our purposes, mystical religious experience from what is commonly called ordinary religious experience. Between the two there is not merely a difference in intensity, but in quality, and this difference is a psychological one, something felt in consciousness.

This experimental sense of the Divine in consciousness is, of necessity, denied as a psychic fact by the agnostic psychologist. His system cannot admit it, and as it is no longer good form to treat the narratives of mystics, like St. Teresa, as a compost of hallucinations, he takes these documents as accurate relations of subjective states falsely interpreted and proceeds to reconstruct them. Those lower psychic features of the psychose which the mystic attributes to the overflow of Divine action, become for James or Dela-

croix the central features from which the sense of the Divine is an interpretative outcrop. To the mystic the sense of the Divine is the most real feature of the whole psychose, although it may not be the most vivid. As it is a strictly personal experience he cannot demonstrate its reality to any critic who may deem it an illusion. Nor has the critic any test by which he can convince himself of the mystic's veracity, save by the mystic's life. States of illusion, as a rule, do not conduce to useful and sustained effort, still less to such great reforming energy as was displayed by St. Teresa. But although the lives of the saints are sufficient to refute those who would assimilate sanctity with a morbid psychose, yet they cannot prove Divine action to those in whose philosophical system God has no place. " He who comes to God must first believe that He is." Natural genius, the sub-conscious and a slight stretching of fact, suffice to explain St. Teresa to the modern world, which takes every religion seriously except the Catholic. The man in whose field of consciousness God is the most attenuated psychic element can hardly be expected to understand those whose consciousness is soaked with God.[1] Those who admit the psychic

[1] For the criticism of the agnostic view of mystical experience the reader may consult with profit, Pacheu, *L'Expérience Mystique et l'Activite Subconsciente* (Paris : Perrin, 1911) ; and for a general criticism of agnosticism and religious experience, Michelet, *Dieu et l'Agnosticisme Contemporain* (Paris : Lecoffre, 1909).

reality of this experimental sense of the Divine may be divided roughly into three groups. A large number of spiritual writers, while acknowledging the reality of mystical experience in the lives of the Saints, contend that mystical experience is something utterly extraordinary, a "*gratia gratis data*," something miraculous in character, quite outside the scope of ordinary spirituality, a Divine favour to which it would be most rash and presumptuous to pretend, which it would be dangerous to desire.[1] "Not only are we unable to properly describe this prayer or teach it to others, but no one should seek to rise to it, if God Himself does not raise him; otherwise it would be a species of pride and presumption meriting the loss of the grace of ordinary prayer and complete aridity." Rodriguez goes rather far in his censure, as it would include authors like St. John of the Cross, as Père de Besse points out.[2] Rodriguez's immense influence has caused this view to be very widespread. He was of course, an ardent propagandist of the method of the *Spiritual Exercises*, and so looked askance on less discursive types of prayer. The extravagances of the Illuminati and the Quietists helped much to make this practically anti-mystical view the dominant opinion even to this day.

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[1] Rodriguez, *Christian Perfection*, "On Prayer," chap. iv.

[2] Cf. Ludovic de Besse, *La Science de la Prière*; Paris: Oudin, 1904, p. 92.

At the opposite pole to Rodriguez are those who hold that the enjoyment of mystical experience merely depends on a suitable ascetical regime. A man becomes a contemplative by removing the obstacles which hide the Divine within him. What was for Rodriguez a revelation, a something given and inspired, is for these Quietists of every shade a revelation, a something revealed and unwrapped. The Divine was latent in consciousness.

The third group takes the *via media* between these extremes. It will not look on mystical experience as miraculous, save in exceptional cases; it regards mystical experience as legitimately desirable and human co-operation necessary to attain to it. But it also regards mystical experience as something given by God to whom He wills and when He wills, as something beyond our grasp unless very specially aided, and it rejects merely negative methods in the mystical ascesis.

The anti-mystical views of Rodriguez have no interest for us as psychologists, and although widespread, owing to the vast numbers whose spiritual education had his *Christian Perfection* for text-book, few spiritual writers of to-day, at all conversant with the subject of mystical experience, accept them unreservedly. Père de Maumigny[1] is a possible exception and his rigorism has been vigorously criticised by the

[1] *Pratique de l'Oraison Mentale*; Paris: Beauchesne, 1909.

Chanoine Saudreau.[1] Poulain, in Chapter xxv of his *Graces d'Oraison*,[2] partly breaks with Rodriguez's exclusivism, although his view of the nature of genuinely mystical prayer has possibly some points in common with that of the author of *Christian Perfection*. We will leave the group of anti-mystics out of our survey, as we are merely examining the matter as psychologists, and confine our attention to those two groups who look on these experiences as fairly common and to some extent reducible to rule.

The chief difference between the second and third groups, between all that may be roughly classed as Quietists and all the varieties of approved mystics, is the part played in mystical experience by ascetical effort in a broad sense of that term. Can we raise ourselves to mystical contemplation, or is there something in it specially "given"? Can we find God within by merely removing obstacles, or must it be that He reveals Himself in some special mode? All admit that we must remove obstacles, and there is a very curious agreement on this point between not alone Christian mystics of every shade of view, but between all mystics, Christian and non-Christian. There is such kinship between the methods employed by Buddhist and Sufi, by Neo-Platonist and Christian, that writers

[1] *Les Faits extraordinaires de la Vie Spirituelle*; Paris: Vic et Amat, 1908, chap. v.

[2] *Les Graces d'Oraison*: Paris: Retaux, 1906 (5th Ed.).

like Vaughan[1] have inferred from them the fundamental similarity of all mystical experience. A writer of very different temper, the Père Maréchal, has shown[2] this similarity in method, with many interesting examples drawn from mystics of every age and creed. If mystical experience were the automatic result of the removal of psychic obstacles there would be no essential difference between Plotinus and St. John of the Cross. On the negative side there is an extraordinary parallelism.

All are practically agreed as to the necessity of a thorough moral ascesis, The would-be mystic must get his outer man in thorough control; his passions must be subdued, and his instincts disciplined. Any lack in this will entail at least failure, and possibly grave danger, during later stages, when the emptying of the field of consciousness is attempted. Then the higher centres of control being withdrawn, there is a very real danger of mischievous automatism in the unmortified lower centres. To this we may attribute much of the scandalous aberrations among the Béghards, the Illuminati, the Fraticelli, and others, who have attempted the psychic ascesis before their bodies had been sufficiently mortified. Apart from this possibility of somatic anarchy, unruly passions and untrained instincts are utterly destructive of

[1] *Hours with the Mystics.*

[2] "Sur quelques traits distinctifs de la mystique chrétienne" (in the *Revue de Philosophie*, Sept.-Oct., 1912, pp. 450 et seq.).

that psychic calm which is an essential pre-requisite of any real psychic kenosis. Any irritation, any persistent temptation will keep the psychic elements of the field of consciousness in a state of acute activity and defy all efforts of the will to induce quiet among them. Before the conscious field can be reduced the nascent idea must be excluded and its source cut off. That is the work to be accomplished by suitable mortification, by ascetical practices pushed further than is needed for the active moral life. The mystic must acquire not merely the moral force to overcome temptation, but the strength not to be mentally disturbed by it. Is it at all surprising then that the ascetical regime adopted by mystics in every age is of a severity quite appalling to those whose moral ideal is a moderate outward respectability? It costs an irascible man much to control the mere outward expression of his feelings, how much more to check their inward reverberation? All the vices may have been cut down, but their roots have to be grubbed up, or they will sprout reminiscences, a crop of nascent ideas to keep the field of consciousness in a state of tension. Hence the prolonged severity of this primary ascesis, the hard labour of self-correction, before any successful effort can be made in the second ascesis, the disciplining of the middle self.

To reach the Beyond of consciousness we must pass beyond the conscious. So long as we rest in it, so

long as it holds our attention, we may form what notions of the Beyond we please, but we cannot get into experimental touch with it. If it is there, if we can grasp it, it can only be by a withdrawal from the conscious, by an abstraction of attention from what is normally before us. If we are looking for some object hidden in a deep shadow in the midst of bright sunshine we must shade our eyes, shut out the brilliant light, before we can peer successfully into the shadow. So, too, in looking within, if we desire to see into the depths of our consciousness we must close our eyes as it were to the brilliant surface lights, passing beyond them and forgetting them. We must get behind our reasonings, our conclusions, our images and sensations, our feelings, likes, and dislikes. If our mental eye focuses itself on some surface element of consciousness, it cannot look further in. We must, therefore, reduce the visibility of these surface elements, lower their psychic dynamism so that they will not determine our attention. Hence the necessity of that emptying of the field of consciousness, which is the psychic ascesis proper to mystical experience.

In the first place the discursive movement of consciousness must be checked. The combination of psychic elements and their division causes a flux and reflux in the field of mental vision which constantly shifts the centre of attention. The whole field must become steady on its surface before we can hope to

penetrate its depths. Where there is motion there is interest with dissipation of the vital energy of attention. Hence contemplation begins where meditation leaves off, with a formed and fixed field of consciousness. As discursive movement is essential to progress in meditation, as in ordinary thought, it is not surprising that those who look on meditation as the connatural form of spirituality should consider the voluntary cessation of mental discourse as open to the gravest objection. Yet this cessation of mental movement is an essential pre-requisite to mystical experience, as all mystics agree, though they differ as to the time when discourse should cease. Hence the hostility of writers like Rodriguez to the vulgarisation of mystical methods of prayer.

Not alone must discourse cease but the more vivid psychic elements, such as sensations, images, and emotions, must be subdued, as they hold attention to a degree far in excess of the purely conceptual and volitional factors in consciousness. So long as they are psychically dynamic they compel interest and form an impregnable barrier to the depths. They must be reduced in intensity by appropriate mortification and edged off the field of view by a studied oblivion. Emotions in particular must be stilled and it is to this end the moral ascesis is absolutely essential. The man of feeling, the sentimentalist, the emotionally unstable, can never hope to penetrate below the outer

skin of consciousness. The mystic may and does feel, but his feelings follow, they do not precede, his essential experience.[1] If they go before, the soul can go no further, it is held in the net of sentiment.

With feelings, sensations and images must be repressed. They are the most limited and individuated elements in our psychic field, as well as the most vivid. Essential to the ordinary process of thought, they hold the mind down to the particular. If it rests in the image it can only just rise to a limited conceptual intelligence. It may apprehend the universal in the particular, but it cannot reach the universal in itself, much less go beyond the universal. To use our concepts we must ever turn to see them in our phantasms, we could only hope to see them in themselves if we could shut out the images in which we normally see them. Our natural mental process is but a half abstraction of the essential, it comes to us with the clay of the concrete clinging to its roots. To reach the pure idea we have to shake off what remains of the image in which it was grown, even that spatial form which is the first and last element of our concrete apprehension, which clings obstinately to our most sublimated concepts as an inveterate and obtrusive concomitant image. Nay, more, we must shake out of consciousness the sense of self, we must effect an

1 Cf. *Summa Theologica*, D. Thomae Aquinatis, Ia. IIae. Q. 24 a. 3, ad primum.

abstraction of the ultimate given in our consciousness from consciousness itself; we must reach out to that pure existence below all the differentiated given of being which we may discover within. The self must become pure subject, and no longer see itself as part object. It is in this final abstraction that mysticism parts company with philosophy, for it enters into the region of super-essential being beyond all determinations and limits. What will the mystic find then? The philosopher will answer, "Nothing." The mystic will retort. "Where there is nothing, there is God."

The process we have just outlined is, in its three stages, moral discipline, psychic kenosis, and attention in depth, common to all mystics. In various shapes and forms, with various philosophical and dogmatic bases, we find this essentially negative method as as part and parcel of the mystical doctrine of Buddhist and Sufi, of Neo-Platonist and Christian mystic, of approved theologian and condemned Quietist. But with a difference: to the one it is adequate, to the other it but represents human co-operation with Divine action. The essentially Quietistic forms of mysticism assume, to a greater or less degree, that it is only necessary to remove obstacles to secure mystical experience. You create a vacuum in the soul and the Divine fills it up.

The Yogi and the Buddhist represent the Quietistic spirit in its most extreme development. Here we

have as the dominant note, not the desire for a fuller life, but the longing to escape from the "wheel" of conscious existence. To achieve this escape from consciousness, various ascetical practices are resorted to. In the Vidya Yoga there are four methods :—

As described by Svâmin Râma-Krishnânanda in the Brahmavâdin, p. 511 seq., it consists, as practised at present, of four kinds: Mantra, Laya, Râja, and Hathayoga *Mantra-yoga* consists in repeating a certain word again and again, particularly a word expressive of deity, and concentrating all one's thoughts on it. *Laya-yoga* is the concentrating all one's thoughts on a thing or the idea of a thing, so that we become almost one with it. Here again the ideal image of a god, or names expressive of the Godhead, are the best, as producing absorption in God. *Râja-yoga* consists in controlling the breath so as to control the mind. It was observed that when fixing our attention suddenly on anything new we hold our breath, and it was supposed, therefore, that concentration of the mind would be sure to follow the holding back of the breath, or the *prânayâmâ*. *Hatha-yoga* is concerned with the general health of the body, and is supposed to produce concentration by certain postures of the body, by fixing the eyes on one point, particularly the tip of the nose, and similar contrivances.[1]

These methods of auto-hypnotism are a very marked feature of Eastern mysticism, and are no doubt success-

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1 Professor Max Müller's *The Life and Sayings of Ramakrishna*, p. 8. as quoted by Oman ; *The Mystics, Ascetics, and Saints of India*. London. 1905. p. 172.

ful in inducing somatic quiet. Like hypnotism they involve a psychic degradation and may readily lead to a disaggregation of the field of consciousness, with the formation of secondary states or subsidiary " personalities," with all their attendant dangers of mental and moral disorder.

The " stages of deliverance " as described by the " Blessed One " (Buddha) to the faithful disciple, Ananda, show the degree to which negation is pushed :

A man possessed with the idea of form sees forms—this is the first stage of deliverance.

Without the subjective idea of form he sees forms internally—this is the second stage of deliverance.

With the thought " it is well," he becomes intent upon what he sees—this is the third stage of deliverance.

By passing quite beyond all idea of form, by putting an end to all idea of resistance, by paying no attention to the idea of distinction, he, thinking " it is all infinite space " reaches and remains in the state of mind in which the idea of the infinity of space is the only idea that is present —this is the fourth stage of deliverance.

By passing quite beyond all idea of space being the infinite basis, he, thinking " it is all infinite reason," reaches and remains in the state of mind to which the infinity of reason is alone present—this is the fifth stage of deliverance.

By passing quite beyond the mere consciousness of the infinity of reason, he, thinking " nothing at all exists " reaches and remains in the state of mind to which nothing at all is specially present—this is the sixth stage of deliverance.

By passing quite beyond all idea of nothingness, he reaches and remains in the state of mind to which neither ideas nor the absence of ideas are specially present—this is the seventh stage of deliverance.

By passing quite beyond the state of " neither ideas nor the absence of ideas," he reaches and remains in the state of mind in which both sensations and ideas have ceased to be—this is the eighth stage of deliverance.

Now these, Ananda, are the eight stages of deliverance.[1]

Here we have psychic nihilism of the most uncompromising character, yet a logical effort to escape from the round of conscious existence. The Nothing of consciousness is sought, not to find God but merely to escape from Self. There is a touch of this nihilism in some of the Sufis :—

Throw the mantle of Nothingness around thee and drink of the cup of annihilation, cover thy heart with the love of being reduced to nothing and thy head with the burnous of Not Being. Put thy feet in the stirrups of unconditional renunciation and spur thy steed to where naught is. . . When thou shalt have swept together all thy interior in total negation, then thou wilt be on the other side of good and evil ; and when there is no longer good or evil for thee, then alone in truth wilt thou love and be worthy of the deliverance which is the work of love.[2]

But Avicenna in describing the highest degree of contemplation does not go so far towards nihilism.

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1 From the Maha-Parinibbana-Sutta, quoted by Stratton in his *Psychology of the Religious Life* ; London : Allen, 1911, p. 200.

2 Farid-ed-Din Attar, quoted by Maréchal, op.cit., p. 454.

"He (the Sufi) looks at God and his soul in turn as in a flash; but finally his very soul vanishes from his eyes, he only beholds Holiness alone, or if he still sees his soul, it is only in that it beholds God. . . . Arrived at that point, he has realised the union."[1] With the Buddhist the process of emptying consciousness is for its own sake, with the Sufi there is the hope of being filled with the Divinity: the end in view is very different.

In Plotinus, that *magnus ille Plato* of St. Augustine, we find the negative mystical process very carefully analysed. He has said perhaps all that unaided human reason can say about the process of mystical experience. Father Sharpe[2] even declares:

We find in Plotinus the most advanced conceptions of the great Christian mystics. There is no vision or locution; all is abstract or purely spiritual. But Plotinus tells us almost in identical phraseology of the mansions of St. Teresa, of the prayer of quiet, of St. John's dark night of faith, and of the spiritual marriage; the "ground" (*κέντρον*) of the soul is with him as familiar and as necessary an idea as it is with the German mystics.

He is regarded by most writers on philosophy as the source of medieval mysticism through the *Theologia Mystica* of Dionysius. The claim is somewhat

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[1] Carra de Vaux, *Gazali*, Paris, 1902, p. 197; id., *Avicenna*, Paris, 1900. quoted by Maréchal, op. cit., p. 455.

[2] *Mysticism, Its True Nature and Value*; London: Sands, p. 151.

excessive. It must be remembered that Plotinus was the disciple of Ammonius Saccas, a Christian pervert[1] and most probably derived through him the fundamental concepts of mystical experience, the necessary moral ascesis and the psychic kenosis, as well as the ultimate aim of a psychic union with the Divinity. His work was that of adaptation to his philosophic system and the rational analysis of the process. It seems much more humanly probable that the Neo-Platonists should "convey" a few telling ideas from a despised and obscure sect like the Christians, than that a Christian monk should plagiarise from Plotinus and Proclus and pass off his forgeries under the name of the disciple of St. Paul. It is a matter of moral appreciation quite as much as literary criticism. Those who see in the *Mystica Theologia* of Dionysius mere Neo-Platonism are mainly scholars who see only the negative process in Christian mystical experience and who fail to see in the Christian mystic the positive element. Indeed a hint at this positive element in Plotinus himself is a very strong indication that the source of his ideas was Christian.

He is within, yet not within. We must not ask whence He comes; there is no whence. For He never comes, and He never goes; but appears, and does not appear. Wherefore we must not pursue Him, but wait quietly till

[1] S. Jerome and Eusebius deny that Saccas apostatized as had been asserted by Porphyry, a somewhat prejudiced witness in such matters.

He show Himself, only we must make ourselves ready to behold, as the eye awaits the dayspring. And He swims above the horizon. . . and gives Himself to our gaze.[1]

A purely naturalistic process would not admit of this occasionalism, one would expect more uniformity. It may be a record of personal experience of some psychic accidents duly systematised, still the passage has a curious touch of Christian experience about it, almost a hint of grace. Here is a sample of his analysis :—

In the intellectual intuition the intelligence beholds the intelligible objects by means of the light shed on them by the First, and in beholding these objects it really sees the intelligible light. But as it gives its attention to the illuminated objects, it does not see very clearly the principle which enlightens them ; if, on the contrary, it forgets the objects it sees, in order to look only at the light which makes them visible, it sees the light itself and the principle of light. But it is not outside itself that the intelligence contemplates the intelligible light. . . when the eye, so as not to see other objects, closes its lids and gets its own light from itself, or when pressed by the hand, it perceives the light that is in itself. Then it sees, without seeing anything exterior to itself ; it even sees more than at any other time, for it sees the light. The other objects it formerly saw, although luminous, were not light itself. So, too, when the intelligence shuts its eyes as it were to other objects, when it concentrates on itself, in seeing nothing it sees no foreign light shining in strange forms

[1] Quoted by Fleming, *Mysticism in Christianity* (p. 68).

but its very own light, which suddenly shines within with a pure radiance.[1]

We find both in Ruysbroeck[2] and Tauler[3] references to the Quietists of their day showing a reliance placed on the negative process as quite adequate to secure mystical experience. Both seem to anticipate the errors of Molinos and other seventeenth-century Quietists.

This shows the deception in the other and false state of quiet, in which men by mere natural effort sink away into natural repose of the mental and bodily powers. They do not yearn for God ; they do not seek him. The quiet of soul they reach leads but to detachment from self, and from what by nature and habit they are inclined to ; but this by no means is to find God. It is an emptiness of soul that a Jew or a heathen might attain, or any wicked man ; they have only to cease questioning their conscience, live wholly self-absorbed, and withdraw from all active life—a state of quiet very enjoyable to a certain class of men. Taken in itself it is not sinful, for it is only what all men naturally are when entirely void of active exertion. But it is far otherwise if one positively seeks to have it and enjoy it to the exclusion of the good works of a Christian life. Then it becomes sinful and

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[1] Plotin, 5e Ennéade, Livre v. (Traduction de M. N. Bouillet), quoted by Maeterlinck in Introduction to Ruysbroeck, *L'ornement des noces Spirituelles*.

[2] *L'ornement des noces spirituelles*, Book ii. chap. 74 et seq.

[3] Sermon for the First Sunday of Lent (in the *Sermons and Conferences of John Tauler* ; English translation by Very Rev. Walter Elliot, Apostolic Mission House, Washington, D.C., 1910, p. 180).

produces a state of spiritual pride and self-assurance from which the soul seldom recovers. Such a man imagines at times that he possesses God, nay, that he has been made one being with God; whereas he is in reality in that state which is most absolutely incompatible with union with God. In this false quiet and false detachment, he considers that all our devout religious exercises only hinder him in his inner peace which delusion is but in reality to resist the entrance of God into his soul. It was thus that the bad angels acted; for what else did they do but turn away from God to themselves and follow their own natural lights? That was the cause of their blindness; it was that which led to their expulsion from the light and repose of heaven into the eternal unrest of hell. But the good angels, from the first instant of their creation, turned absolutely to God as the only end and object of all their existence, and thereby were granted everlasting happiness.[1]

Bossuet did not deal more faithfully with the Quietists of his day. The outbreak of Quietism which marked the latter half of the seventeenth century owed its origin to attempts to systematise contemplative prayer as the Jesuits had systematised meditation. The original Ignatian simplicity had been much elaborated and developed by them. The method of the meditation had been popularised by countless retreats and missions; innumerable ascetical works, following the lead of Rodriguez's *Christian Perfection*, had advocated it as the one and only type of mental

[1] Tauler, Sermon for First Sunday of Lent (p. 185 translation cited).

prayer suitable for all. Other types of mental prayer, less discursive, more unitive and affective, were discouraged, if not disparaged, by the propagandists of the meditation. The broad result of this was that the meditation became the normal form of mental prayer throughout the religious Orders and the devout laity. Even in the Carmels and the Visitations in France, the natural homes of contemplative prayer, the meditation type drove out more unitive forms.[1] Mental prayer became standardised and uniform, to the no small comfort of spiritual directors. The Ignatian meditation, when practised in the spirit of the Exercises, has very intimate bearings on spiritual progress, and the skilful director can and does adjust the prayer of his penitent in view of the correction of dominant faults and progress in acquiring virtues. This dosage is not so easy a matter when the type of mental prayer is less discursive, more unitive, and hence it is not surprising that the spiritual guides of religious communities should much prefer the meditation.

This exclusivism led to a reaction. Many devout persons did not relish the meditation and preferred some form of contemplative prayer, such as had been largely popularised by the early members of the Visitation, who had been trained in the spiritual life by St, Francis de Sales and St. Jeanne de Chantal.

[1] Cf. Saudreau, *Vie d'union à Dieu* (chap. ix. sect. 7); Paris Amat, 1909. See also chap.. viii. sect. 4.

Authorities differ as to whether this species of contemplation is mystical or not, the Chanoine Sandreau and Père de Besse affirming, Père Poulain denying; but at any rate it was non-discursive and was the normal form of mental prayer in the early years of the Visitation Order. Many outside the Visitation were attracted by its extreme simplicity and the good results observed in those who practised it.

But the very simplicity of this prayer constituted a grave danger when attempts were made to popularise its general use and to systematise it. The psychic complexity of a meditation admits of analysis and regulation, but the prayer of *simple remise*, of simple regard, or of faith, for it had many names, was so psychically simple that all directions concerning it tended to become negative. Those maxims of St. Francis de Sales, directed to the removal of obstacles to this prayer, were all emphasized and enlarged. From Falconi to Molinos, from Malaval to Madame Guyon, we find, in varying degrees, the negation of all psychic activity put forward as the method *par excellence* to attain to contemplation. Save for the initial act of union with God the process of the Quietists can hardly be distinguished from the methods of the Buddhists.

Be careeful, when doing what I advised you, not to occupy yourself there with considering that God is present in your soul and your heart. For although that is a good

thing. . . it would not be to believe it with sufficient simplicity. . . Neither worry yourself to know whether your prayer goes well or badly. Don't trifle with yourself . . . in thinking whether or no you practise the virtues I have marked for you, or other such matters. This would be to occupy your mind with these feeble considerations and break the thread of perfect prayer.[1]

Annihilation, to be perfect, should extend to the judgement, actions, inclinations, desires, thoughts, to all the substance of life.[2]

We must think of nothing and desire nothing for as long a time as is possible.[3]

This divine life becomes natural to the soul. As the soul no longer feels, sees or knows itself, it sees nothing of God, understands nothing, distinguishes nothing. There is no longer love, light, or knowledge.[4]

Thus a type of contemplation which had so largely contributed to the sanctification of the companions of St. Chantal was perverted into a system of psychic inertia, with all the possibilities of scandalous excess which self-induced psychic passivity affords. It is somewhat alarming to find this system becoming popular in certain non-Catholic circles in England, as shown in the recent cheap editions of the *Guida* of Molinos and the *Moyen Court* of Madame Guyon. Tauler's criticism is not yet out of date, unhappily. We have

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[1] Falconi, Letter to a Spiritual Daughter, quoted in Poulain, *Les Graces d'Oraison*, p. 505.

[2] Molinos, *Guida*, Bk. ii. ch. 19, No. 193, quoted Poulain, p. 506.

[3] Malaval, quoted by Poulain, p. 506.

[4] Madame Guyon, *Torrents*, quoted by Poulain, p. 507.

not only our Quietists to-day, but we have this induced passivity, this psychic kenosis, as part and parcel of processes employed by spiritists, faith healers, Christian Scientists, New Thought folk, indeed of all seekers after the psychic Beyond, who are unwilling to be simple, humble, and obedient. They look to find the Beyond, and they find themselves, to their own destruction. "What, is it not a good thing to allow God to work? Certainly, when it is His will to work and when it is for Him to work. But when the soul ought to act, if it stops indiscreetly, then the devil steps in."[1]

Quietism in all its types, extreme or moderate, rests on the assumption that we have only to remove obstacles to find God, to find Him not alone morally but experimentally. It tacitly assumes that the Divine is a latent factor of consciousness, potentially visible; it confuses the Divine with that wide indeterminate concept of being to which we may attain by pushing the process of abstraction to its utmost limits. This intelligible cannot be God, for "if in seeing God we understand what we see, it is not God we have contemplated, but something which comes from Him and which we can know."[2]

Apart from this fundamental error the negative method of the Quietists leaves the outer and middle

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[1] P. Surin, *Catéchisme Spirituelle*, part v. chap. 3, quoted Poulain, p. 503.

[2] Dionysius the Areopagite, Letter I.

selves shut off from central control free to develop any latent automatisms which habits, good or bad, may have formed; open, too, like some psychic Marconi receiver, to every cosmic influence from without. The history of Quietism in East and West is a long story of psychic accidents, generally unpleasing, often scandalous, sometimes abominable. Occultists are at one with orthodox mystics in deprecating the rash production of psychic passivity. It is the most difficult thing in the world of the soul to effect the true mystic kenosis.

I think no scorn or suffering ever to be met with on earth can try us so severely as these struggles within our souls. All uneasiness or conflict can be borne as long as we have peace in ourselves, as I said, but if, while we seek for rest amidst the thousand trials of the world—knowing that God has prepared this rest for us—our minds remain in such tumult, it is a trial which must needs prove painful and almost insufferable.[1]

If a sharp penance had been laid upon me, I know of none that I would not very often have willingly undertaken, rather than prepare myself for prayer by self-recollection . . . They say of me that my courage is not slight, and it is known that God has given me a courage beyond that of a woman; but I have made a bad use of it. In the end Our Lord comes to my help; and then, when I had done this violence to myself, I found greater peace and joy than I sometimes had when I had a desire to pray.[2]

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[1] St. Teresa, *Interior Castle*, iv. chap. i. par. 11.

[2] St. Teresa, *Life*, chap. viii. par. 10.

What St. Teresa found difficult the Quietists proclaimed easy. Madame Guyon would teach her method to all. It was a "Short and very Easy Method of Prayer." Malaval's booklet is entitled *Pratique facile pour élever l'âme à la contemplation.* It was Elias in a periwig; the Hotel Rambouillet changed into the Hotel Beauvilliers; the *précieuse* become the devotee; Trissotin turned spiritual director; Vadius a master of the spiritual life!

The touchstone of the true and the false in mystical experience is humility. Buddhist and Sufi, Illuminati and Quietists, all are self-satisfied and contemptuous of other men. Can they not reach the Divine? Are they not the supermen who have raised themselves above the vulgar, who have penetrated further than their fellows into the arcana of Being? Outwardly modest and mortified, they are inwardly superior, they are not as other men, "even this publican." And with justice, if their views are right: if man can climb to God, he has the right to be proud of his legs.

CHAPTER II

MYSTICAL EXPERIENCE PROPER

PRIOR to the development and popularisation of the Ignatian method of meditation, the mental prayer practised throughout the Catholic Church was of a type more fluid, more flexible, less systematic. Based on the liturgy, drawing its dogmatic sustenance from the offices and public prayers of the Church, and varying with them according to the seasons of the ecclesiastical year, the mental prayer of the pre-Reformation monk, friar, and nun had a note of freedom which we do not find in the systematic meditation. "It is a complete anachronism," says Dom M. Festugière, "to speak of *meditation* in the *modern sense* of the word —three points, systematic series of acts—in connexion with Christians and monks of the first fourteen centuries. At that time they prayed, they did not *meditate*."[1] Further on[2] he develops this idea.

The liturgy, so vocal and so loquacious, far from giving souls a relish for *meditation*, in itself discursive and wordy, leads them very rapidly and inevitably to *affective prayer* and to "*acquired*" *contemplation*. Let us not be misunderstood in this matter. Always at the beginning of, and very often during the course of, the spiritual life, we need a text when we pray, to set our prayer going: some few

1 'La liturgie catholique' (in the *Revue de Philosophie*, Mai, Juin, Juillet, 1913, p. 728, note 3).

2 Art. cit. p. 766.

pages at choice in a book related or not to the liturgy, a psalm, a passage of Scripture, a single verse, will serve. (It must be admitted that many souls, more than is usually thought, having progressed in spirituality, base their prayer on the Name of God only, or on the feeling of His Presence, or on the impression as a whole left by the recitation of the Divine Office, etc.) Let us remember that St. Teresa, at the beginining of her religious life, when she was only in the period of " the purification of the senses," only made use of a prayer-book to become recollected, and during her prayer hardly ever made a discursive use of her understanding. We will avoid the error of likening acquired contemplation to mystical prayer, but between the two states there are analogies. Now, the liturgy, thanks to the happy union it establishes between the intellectual and affective elements in spiritual life, promptly guides souls towards those modes of activity which we may name indifferently *loving contemplation* or *contemplative love, thought which loves* or *love which thinks.*[1]

The decline in liturgy saw the rise of the meditation. The go-as-you-please orison of the old monks and friars gave place to the military precision of the *Spiritual Exercises*, yet the more simple methods were not quite forgotten. Following the example of the *Exercises* attempts were made to systematise them, to bring them under rule. As it was found by experience that in these lower types of unitive prayer there was a considerable scope for conative activity, that human

1 See also the brief history of mental prayer given in Poulain, *Les Graces d'Oraison*, chap. ii. sect. 5 (C.T.S. booklet, *The Prayer o Simplicity*, p. 89 et seq.).

effort played a large and conscious part, some of the seventeenth-century theologians who treated of mystical prayer divided contemplation into two species, the acquired and the infused. Philip of the Holy Trinity, provincial of the Carmelites of Aquitaine, made this distinction classic, in his *Summa Theologiae Mysticae*, which appeared in 1656. He was followed by Thomas de Vallgornera in 1662, and it is only in our own time that this distinction has been seriously challenged. It contributed more than anything else to the development of Quietist doctrines, for Molinos and his followers pushed the methods recognised as legitimate in the so-called acquired contemplation, to extremes.[1] It is not to be found in the earlier mystics, as Saudreau and others have shown, unless violence is done to the texts. Vallgornera's attempt to enlist St. Thomas is specious but inconclusive, and he admits that the distinction is only hinted at.[2] The main tendency of mystical theology in the seventeenth century seems to have been to separate as far as possible mystical experience from the spiritual experience of ordinary Christians, to look on the graces which give rise to mystical experience as *gratiae gratis datae*, as extraordinary charismata, akin to the gifts of healing, of miracles, of prophecy, of tongues. Clearly, if that

1 Cf. Poulain, *Les Graces d'Oraison*, 5th ed. chap. iv. par. 9.

2 *Theologica Mystica*, Q. III. Disp. I.art. 4, p. 358, ed. Marietti, 1911

were so, the ordinary contemplation known and practised in hundreds of cloisters, the types of prayer common to the Visitation nuns during the lifetime of St. Francis de Sales and St. Chantal, could not be considered mystical. A new category had to be found, and acquired contemplation was invented to include the prayer of "*simple remise*" of St. Francis de Sales and kindred types. The experience of souls had to be adjusted to a narrow mystical theory, a *via media* had to be found between meditation and ecstatic forms of prayer. Types of mental prayer were found among persons whose lives were a testimony that their prayer was unexceptionable, which had none of the discursive and multiplex features of meditation, and which were akin in simplicity to acknowledged mystical prayers, yet in which the conative element played a marked part and the consciously "given" seemed absent. It seemed obvious that such prayers should be a class apart, they were active contemplation or acquired contemplation. The new category became classic, and the possibility and frequency of non-mystical contemplation was an accepted commonplace with spiritual writers until our own time.[1]

Père Poulain is perhaps the best accredited repre-

1 For the full criticism of this distinction the reader may usefully consult Saudreau, *Vie d'Union à Dieu* (Paris : Amat, 1909) ; De Besse, *La Science de la Prière* (Paris : Oudin, 1904) ; J. Delacroix, *Ascetique et Mystique* (Paris : Bloud, 1912) ; Lamballe, *La Contemplation* (Paris : Tequi, 1912.)

sentative of this view to-day. His great treatise, *Les Graces d'Oraison*, is a monument of industrious research and wide experience as a spiritual director. It will rank with Scaramelli's great work as a storehouse of experience, classified with great acumen, and quite indispensable to the student of mystical phenomena. As theorists there is much to criticise in both authors; but as shrewd, practical guides and industrious collectors and classifiers of varied types of spiritual experience, one has become a classic, and the other will be one in due course of time.

Now Père Poulain has devoted a long chapter to the prayer of simplicity which, with Scaramelli, he regards as non-mystical. With considerable skill he traces its development from the meditation by a process of gradual simplification. The meditation, a complex of considerations and affections, grows into affective prayer by a gradual reduction in the number of considerations.

The difference between this degree and meditation is only a matter of more or less. It is a discourse, only less varied and less apparent and leaving more room for sentiments of love, praise, gratitude, respect, submission, contrition, etc., and also for practical resolutions. The deduction of truths is partly replaced by intuition. From the intellectual point of view the soul becomes simplified . . . But the simplification can be carried farther still, and may extend, in a certain measure, to the will, which then becomes satisfied with very little variety in the affections

There is nothing to prevent them from being very ardent at times, but they are usually produced without many words. This is what we call the Prayer of Simplicity, or of Simple Regard. It can be defined thus; a mental prayer where (i) intuition in a great measure replaces reasoning, (ii) the affections and resolutions show very little variety and are expressed in few words.[1]

This only touches the matter on its negative side, Père Poulain completes it by declaring:—

In the prayer of simplicity there is a thought or a sentiment that returns incessantly and easily (although with little or no development) amongst many other thoughts, whether useful or not.

This dominant thought does not go so far as to be continuous. It merely returns frequently and of its own accord. . . The prayer of simple regard is really only a slow sequence of single glances cast upon one and the same object.[2]

This degree differs from the preceding degrees only as the greater differs from the less. The persistence of one principal idea, however, and the vivid impression that it produces, point as a rule to an increased action on God's part.

An exaggerated picture of the prayer of simplicity

1 *Les Graces d'Oraison*, 5th ed., chap. ii. par. 2 (C.T.S. booklet, *The Prayer of Simplicity*, p. 12).

2 " C'est un tissu d'actes de foi et d'amour si simples, si directes, si paisibles et si uniformes qu'ils ne paroissent plus aux personnes ignorantes qu'un seul acte, ou même qu'ils ne paroissent faire aucun acte, mais un repos de pur union."—Fénelon, *Explication des Maximes des Saints sur la Vie intérieure*. Edition critique publie d'après des documents inédits par Albert Cherel. Paris: Bloud, 1911, p. 262.

has been drawn at times. It has been so described as to lead us to suppose that the intellect and the will continue inactive before a single idea. In this case the multiplicity of acts would have disappeared entirely and during the whole time that the prayer lasted; whereas it has only diminished notably and for a certain time—long enough to draw attention to it. The simplicity is approximate only.[1]

If this be acquired contemplation, wherein does it differ psychologically from a meditation attenuated to a point? It is difficult to see from Père Poulain's description any real difference. The attention, instead of wandering discursively over the religious field of consciousness, passing from one psychic element to another, combining and disintegrating them to form the final mental picture on which the soul's eye can rest, is fixed on some one psychic element which it draws from the storehouse of memory, and concentrates intelligence and will on this one point. The field is cleared not merely of distracting and importunate thoughts, as in the ordinary process of meditation, but all superfluous psychic elements are got rid of and the conscious field is reduced to a minimum. The mind's eye is focussed on a point and not suffered to wander. This involves the emptying of consciousness of all but the point under attention; *it is not the kenosis of the whole field with attention in depth.* Clearly there is no mystical element, the whole process comes

1 Poulain, l.c., C.T.S. booklet, p. 14.

under the ordinary laws of psychology, and we have nothing mysterious, nothing hidden. If the prayer of "*simple remise*," of Simplicity, of Simple Regard is only a meditation developed or attenuated to a point, we must admit the contention of those who declare that it is non-mystical.

"The persistence of one principle idea, however, and the vivid impression that it produces, point, as a rule, to an increased action on God's part." We must note this statement of Père Poulain and see what it implies. One would naturally expect that the attenuation of the elements of a meditation to one point would lower the psychic dynamism of the idea, beget monotony and weariness. There is great psychic difficulty in prolonged attention to any one element in the field of consciousness, interest soon flags and distraction follows. A certain amount of change is necessary to hold attention and stimulate the will. But in the prayer of simplicity we have an almost static condition and yet of singular psychic dynamism. Père Poulain postulates increased action of grace, yet as grace follows nature is it not surprising that the increased action should follow a psychological handicap? Can we justly describe such action of the Divine as ordinary and non-mystical?

Again he speaks of a "thought or sentiment that returns incessantly and easily," does not this imply a certain passivity not quite ordinary? But his most remarkable admission is, perhaps, this :—

When this state has reached its full development, not only do certain acts of which I have just spoken become rare, but the attempt to produce them results in a feeling of impotence and distaste. And it is then the same also with those representations of the imagination which would aid other persons in their prayer.[1]

What is this but the "ligature" of the mystics? How can it possibly be ordinary and non-mystical? A most difficult psychic operation becomes not only easy, but the normal wandering off of the attention to features of natural interest is restrained. Clearly, in his prayer of simplicity, the attention is either fixed and riveted by the extraordinary action of ordinary grace, sufficient to overcome the most natural and urgent impulses to distraction, a strengthening of the will to a marvellous degree, or we must admit in this prayer some element not reducible to the terms of an attenuated meditation. We have to choose between the miraculous and the mystical. Is it reasonable to suppose that grace acts in this prayer *qua* ordinary grace (never refused to anyone, as Père Poulain states in the second paragraph of his first Chapter) in such an extraordinary way, bordering on the miraculous? Is it not more reasonable, more theological, to suppose that there is some new element contributed, not a mere reinforcement of the will only? Why attenuate the psychic dynamism of normal meditation, only to supply the deficiency

1 Poulain, l.c., C.T.S. booklet, p. 13.

by an extraordinary strengthening of the elements left? What would be gained by this process?[1]

If we reject this view of the non-mystical character of the prayer of simplicity, we are forced to inquire—what is in the nature of this prayer which transcends an excessively simplified meditation? The description which Père Poulain gives is excellent, as far as it goes, but it does not go far enough. He will not admit the existence of a mystical element in it; yet, when he comes to discuss the Dark Night of St. John of the Cross, he admits that to all appearance the "first night of St. John of the Cross is a prayer of simplicity, but having characteristics, two in especial, which make it a particular species; it is bitter, and it is to God alone, as a rule, that the simple regard is unceasingly directed."[2] In a note he admits that St. John of the Cross puts the aridity of the night of sense as an immediate sequel to meditation, omitting affective prayer and the prayer of simplicity, as defined by Père Poulain. Further on Père Poulain argues that in the Dark Night there is a latent mystical element, an imperceptible prayer of quiet.[3] Possibly he might have recognised this same latent mystical element in his own prayer of simplicity, if he had not

1 For further proofs of the essentially mystical character of the prayer of simplicity, see Lamballe, *La Contemplation* (Paris Tequi, 1912, p. 92 et seq.)

2 *Les Graces d'Oraison*, chap. xv. par. 3, 5th ed., p. 200.

3 Poulain, op. cit., p. 206.

decided *à priori* that it was an ordinary and non-mystical type of prayer. The same type of contemplation as described by Père de Besse and the Chanoine Saudreau is much closer to St. John of the Cross, for these writers, unlike Père Poulain, have not made abstraction of the mystical quality.

What, then, is the latent element in the prayer of simplicity which marks it off psychologically from a simplified meditation? The persistence of the main idea and the incipient "ligature" or inhibition, more or less marked, of certain normal psychic acts are those disturbances from which we may infer the presence of a new psychic element. Clearly the attention so firmly held and restrained from wandering is not fixed in the usual fashion. There is some new interest, something capable of putting all the forces of the soul in an "unnatural" attitude, of fixing the wandering mind and gripping the wayward heart. It is an unseen interest, one hardly felt, yet its effects are ultra-dynamic. The conscious element, on which the mind *seems* focussed, is some old idea, time-honoured and well worn, the outcome of study, of previous meditations. It has nothing new in it, it is something trite and commonplace, its intellectual interest has been worked out by repetition, so that it has nothing of the nascent idea about it; nay more, it lacks the dynamic support of the normal field of consciousness from which it has been carefully filtered out. The

conscious element, therefore, is psychically weak and cannot account for the interest which holds the whole soul fixed. An interest implies an object which excites interest, and this is not given in what is obvious to consciousness during this prayer. If it were it could be readily described, and there would be no mystery. It is not a simple reinforcement of the will by itself, for then the psychic feature of interest would not appear, but rather that of satisfaction in doing a dull duty. We must account for this sense of interest, which is present in all mystical experience, although its extent varies as greatly as its other characteristics of joy and sorrow. What can this hidden object be, this true Beyond of consciousness, which can hold the attention of the soul to something unknown, beneath the trite and the commonplace, which can inflame the will to a degree surpassing all eloquent considerations of the reason, backed by the might of imagination and emotion? It can only be the Idea of God, presented to consciousness in a new mode, or rather *sine modo*.

Many abide in error, so that they come not to Contemplation, or to that which hath no Mode. Yet every hindrance is within themselves. They are disquieted at heart, Watching narrowly the deeds of others, Concerning themselves with the cares of their friends and kinsmen in which they have no part, Careful for their own necessities, Wherefore the riches of God are veiled from their eyes.[1]

1 Ruysbroeck, *The Book of the Twelve Beguines*, chap. vi. p. 65 (London: Watkins, 1913.)

The idea of God may be developed in consciousness, either positively or negatively. His image may be formed, as by a painter, adding touch to touch, detail to detail; or as by a sculptor, cutting away whatever is superfluous, removing whatever does not belong to the Figure sought. In his commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans, (i. 19), St. Thomas points out that "there is something concerning God which must remain, wholly unknown to man in this life, namely, what is God," and the reason assigned is that:

Man's knowledge takes its beginning in those things which are connatural to him, namely the created objects of sense-perception, and these are not adequate to represent the Divine Essence. From these creatures man may rise to knowledge of God in three ways, as Dionysius declares in the book of the Divine Names. In one manner through the principle of causality. As such creatures are defective and changeable, it is necessary to bring them under some principle that is unmoved and perfect; and thus we know of God that He exists. Secondly, by the way of excellence. For all things are not brought under the one principle, as under a specific and homogeneous cause, as a man generates a man; but as under a cause inclusive of all yet exceeding all; and thus we know that God is above all things. Thirdly, by the way of negation; if the cause exceed all, nothing that is in creatures can appertain to it. . . . Thus we say of God that He is unmoved and has no bounds and such like.[1]

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1 Cited in Vallgornera, ed. Marietti, vol. i.p. 355.

In the *Summa Contra Gentiles* (Book i. chap. 14) St. Thomas declares that this way of negation, of removal, is the method which should be made use of when considering the Divine Substance.

For the Divine Substance by Its immensity exceeds every formal principle to which our intelligence can reach, and so we cannot apprehend It by knowing what It is, but we may have a sort of knowledge of It by knowing what It is not. We will become the more clearly aware of It, the more things we can take from It by our understanding; for we know anything the more perfectly, the more we recognise its differences from other things, for each thing has in itself something distinct from all other things.

In our ordinary knowledge we fine down our general concepts by adding the appropriate specific differences until we reach the point when we can distinguish the object considered from all others. But in our knowledge of God we cannot proceed by genus and difference as a positive addition, we must effect the distinction from all other beings by negative differences.

Thus, if we say that God is not an accident, by this is He distinguished from all accidents. Then if we add that He is not a body, we further distinguish Him from some substances; and so step by step is He distinguished by these negations from everything except Himself; and then His substance may be rightly considered when it is known *as distinct from all.* This, however, will not be perfect knowledge, because He is not known *as He is in Himself.*

The positive mode of the formation of the idea of

God in consciousness accords well with the discursive method of the meditation, and, when formed, the affirmative idea may well be the matter of contemplation. The prayer of simplicity, as restricted by Père Poulain, or as suggested in a tract by Bossuet[1] (which has been somewhat severely criticised by Père de Maumigny[2]), may have such an idea among others as its object But such contemplation, is not essentially mystical, for the object contemplated, a positive idea, comes well within the scope of ordinary psychic activity. It is in contemplation, *per viam negationis*, where the idea of God has been formed negatively, that we may find the true mystical type if we can succeed in excluding what may be termed philosophical contemplation or speculation.

The negative idea of God is the result of a process of abstraction pushed to the ultimate. As He transcends all creation, being the Creator, we arrive at the ultimate distinction, as pointed out in our quotations from the *Summa Contra Gentiles*, by a series of negtions, by which we reject the Conditioned and the Relative in all their varied aspects. We thus, by a process of elimination, rise to the widest and most general concept of Being, but we have not yet reached

1 For this semi-quietist tract of Bossuet, see Rousset, *La Doctrine Spirituelle*, vol. ii. app. i. "L'Oraison en foi et de simple presence de Dieu," par Bossuet (Paris : Lethielleux.)

2 *Pratique de l'Oraison mentale*, 2nd vol. p. 80 (Paris : Beauchesne, 1909).

the negative idea of God. Our notion of Being, in its widest and most unlimited form, is after all an idea or concept of created being, for it is derived by a process of psychic filtration from the manifold of sense by which we gain our knowledge of created things. Our utmost knowledge of all that is implied in the word "**IS**" comes from what we know of the Relative, it cannot reach the Absolute without transcending both the " given " of experience and our own relativity our limitations, our weakness. God is the Absolute, or He is not, and we can only express His Name in consciousness by a denial of the very ultimate of consciousness, the final elaboration of the idea of Being. The very word Absolute is a negative, and postulates the denial of the Relative. If we wish to discourse about it, we must express ourselves in negative propositions. We may consider it only indirectly, by denying of it all that we assert of the Relative, by emptying our experience of all its elements If we fail to make this final kenosis, our idea of the Absolute is but a sublimation of the Relative : instead of an ultimate distinction we have a final unity, and we are Pantheists. If we attempt by mere force of reasoned abstraction to pass beyond our widest concept of Being, we are plunged in the void ; blank nothingness confronts our consciousness, we are choked in a vacuum. There is no natural foothold for our minds in the Absolute, if we would reason about it

we must descend to the planes of being, relative and limited, and argue by denial. Hence the nature of God, as given in philosophical speculation, is only known as something distinct from all, but cannot be known "as He is in Himself."

Moses said to God: Lo, I shall go to the children of Israel, and say to them: The God of your fathers hath sent me to you. If they should say to me: What is His name; What shall I say to them? God said to Moses: I Am Who Am. He said: Thus shalt thou say to the children of Israel: He Who Is, hath sent me to you (Exod. iii. 13, 14). And the Lord spake to Moses, saying: I am the Lord, that appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, by the name of God Almighty: and my name, Adonai, I did not show them (Exod. vi. 2, 3).

Adonai, Lord, the substitute read for the Ineffable Name, the proper Name of God, signifying His Eternal Self-existent Being, the name whose very sound is lost, the Jehovah of modern use being merely a version of the cryptogram of the Scribes.

We read in the life of St. Catherine of Sienna, by Blessed Raymond of Capua:

At the beginning of her Divine visions, that is to say at the time when Our Lord began to manifest Himself to the saint, He appeared to her one day when in prayer and said to her: Dost thou know, daughter, who thou art and Who I am? If thou hast this double knowledge, thou wilt be blest. Thou art she who is not, I am He Who is. If thou keep fast this truth in thy soul, the enemy can never deceive thee, thou wilt escape all his snares; never wilt

thou consent to do aught against My commandments, and thou wilt attain without difficulty all grace, all truth, all light.[1]

The aim of philosophical speculation is knowledge, the aim of mystical contemplation is love. The philosopher seeks to know, to understand, to express his knowledge. He must needs, when he considers the Absolute, return again to that experience from which by negation he derived his idea. To understand we must see again our ideas in the phantasms or images from which we abstracted them, there must be a *conversio ad phantasmata*.[2] But the negative idea of God allows of no such image in which the idea is mirrored; we must revert to a lower plane of experience. The mystic must do likewise if he desires to express his experience, hence the stream of negations and aequipollent negations that we find in mystics like Ruysbroeck. They describe their experience by denying the given of a lower experience.

If anyone, seeing God, knows what he sees, it is by no means God that he sees, but something created and knowable. For God abides above created intellect and existence, and is in such sense unknowable and non-existent that He exists above all existence and is known above all power of knowledge. And this most perfect possible unknowing (*ἀγνωσία*) is the true knowledge (*γνῶσις*) of Him Who is above all that can be known.[3]

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1 Chap. x., at the beginning.

2 Cf. *Summa Theologica*, D. Thomae Aquinatis, i. q. 84, a. 7.

3 Dionysius the Areopagite, Letter I.

We have thus a certain parallelism between the mystical idea of God and the philosopher's ultimate conception of the Absolute. When an effort is made to describe the experience of the mystic and to set forth our least inadequate concept of the Divinity attainable by reason, we find a certain similarity.[1] But in the two experiences there is a vast difference. The mystic is in love, the Philosopher seeks to know. To the former the experience is real, is lived ; to the latter it is a notion, expressed in consciousness by a negation, laboriously elaborated from more psychically real experiences. The philosopher labours upward, climbing from negation to negation until he attains the ultimate of denial. Although his result expresses the Most Awful Actuality, the Only Ultimately Real, He Who Is, in consciousness it remains the emptiest of notions, only dimly recognised, if at all, in the denial of the given of all experience. For the Mystic this negative idea is the Finger of the Most High touching his inmost being, and his heart blazes at the touch. He does not seek to know. " I am the most foolish of men and the wisdom of men is not with me. I have not learned wisdom, and have not known the science of saints " (Prov. xxx. 2, 3). To know, he would have to turn again to the created, to avert his gaze from God revealed to his heart. For the

1 Cf. *Holy Wisdom*, Father Baker, p. 403 and p. 512 of Burns and Oates' edition, 1908.

philosopher the kenosis of consciousness is but a dialectical process, for the mystic it is a vital necessity that his heart may feel what his mind cannot grasp.

For this reason, then, if anyone is moved to love God by that sweetness he feels, he casts that sweetness away from him, and fixes his love upon God, Whom he does not feel; but if he allowed himself to rest in that sweetness and delight which he feels, dwelling upon them with satisfaction, that would be to love the creature, and that which is of it, and to make the motive an end, and the act of the will would be vitiated; for, as God is incomprehensible and unapproachable, the will, in order to direct its act of love unto God, must not direct it to that which is tangible and capable of being reached by the desire, but must direct it to that which it cannot comprehend nor reach thereby. In this way the will loves that which is certain and true, according to the spirit of the faith, in emptiness and darkness as to its own feelings, above all that it can understand by the operations of the understanding; its faith and love transcend all that it can comprehend.[1]

That an idea, so empty of all psychically positive elements, so essentially unintelligible, should exercise such dynamic influence on the will would seem to contradict the maxim, *nil volitum nisi precognitum*.[2] All the records of mystical experience go to show the excessive nature of the love generated by this imperceptible cognition, if we may so call it. The cognitive

1 St. John of the Cross, Letter X (p. 162 of *The Living Flame*. London: Baker, 1912).

2 See St. John of the Cross's commentary on this maxim, *Spiritual Canticles*, stan. xxvi. 6, p. 203 (Baker's edition).

element is so delicate, so difficult to grasp or to express that many, with St. Bonaventure,[1] looked on the element of love as given apart from knowledge, a view vehemently combated by the Thomists, who postulated the gift of a higher knowledge to account for the outburst of love which is the most palpable feature of mystical experience. But the negative idea of God would constitute this higher knowledge and yet be so imperceptible as to justify in a measure those who perceived the love and failed to notice the knowledge.

In our ordinary psychic life we love that which we know and we have knowledge of that which we love With the motion of the will we have the antecedent word of the understanding. The acts of the will and of the intellect can be distinguished in consciousness, we can look on them in their relation of antecedent and consequent, of cause and effect. But in mystical experience we can find no formulated word of the understanding, while the motion of the will is evident. If we postulate the two acts we must assume a fusion, a union as of matter and form, of body and soul. Blosius assumes that in the hidden depth of the soul the higher intellectual powers, the memory, understanding and will, become as one.[2] Lopez Ezquerra

1 See Meynard, *Traité de la Vie Intérieure* (Paris: Amat, 1913 p. 27).

2 *Inst. Spirit.*, c. 12, quoted Meynard, p. 35.

turns the difficulty by assuming that direct acts are more effective and less observed than reflex acts and that knowledge in mystical contemplation is unnoticed, being a most direct act of the intelligence.[1]

If we postulate the existence of the negative idea of God, can it not act directly on the will without prior formulation as a word of the understanding? From the given of sense we abstract the inchoate concept, we filter out the individuating elements, and the essential residue bumps into our intelligence which illumines and vitally reacts to the impression by forming the word of the mind, the concept which expresses the universal which was wrapped up in the individual. By the idea thus formed and expressed the will is attracted or repelled, freely, as by something apprehended, for we can choose since we know. We can alter our field of consciousness, we can change the idea presented, or we can consider its repellent or attractive aspects and increase or diminish their dynamism by our attention. But we cannot do this with the negative idea of God, it does not become a word of the understanding, for the intellect is too feeble to respond to the impression. If we could form a *verbum mentis* it would be a blank, a complete void of all human meaning, a something or rather a nothing absolutely inert towards the will. The negative idea fails to become a *species impressa* for

1 *Lucerna Mystica*, Tr. 2, c. 9, no. 79, quoted Meynard, p. 45.

the intelligence, the stamp strikes the will direct. It is the will which vitally reacts to the negative idea of God by an act of love and in that act, the intelligence gleans knowledge.[1]

How is this theory compatible with freedom? How can there be a choice if the negative idea, unformulated by the understanding into a word of the mind, acts directly on the will? It will be the unique object of the will and so must determine it. How is freedom, and its corollary merit, to be saved? Respondeo dicendum: quidquid recipitur recipitur per modum recipientis. The will which can receive and be moved by the negative idea of God is a somewhat different will from that which is moved by the positive ideas of normal psychic experience. It is a will emptied of all affections for the created universe of things considered in themselves; not merely, as in ordinary moral ascesis, of all inordinate affections but of all natural affection which rests in the creature.

It is, therefore, plain that no distinct object whatever that pleases the will can be God; and for that reason, if it is to be united with Him, it must empty itself, cast away every disorderly affection of the desire, every satisfaction it may distinctly have, high and low, temporal and spiritual, so that, purified and cleansed from all unruly satisfactions, joys, and desires, it may be wholly occupied, with all its affections, in loving God. For if the will can

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[1] Cf. St. John of the Cross, *The Living Flame*, stanza iii. § 51 (London: Baker 1912, p. 90).

in any way comprehend God and be united with Him, it cannot be through any capacity of the desire, but only by love ; and as all delight, sweetness and joy, of which the will is sensible, is not love, it follows that none of these pleasing impressions can be the adequate means of uniting the will to God ; the means are an act of the will. And because an act of the will is quite distinct from feeling : it is by an act that the will is united with God, and rests in Him ; that act is love. This union is never wrought by feeling, or exertions of the desire, for these remain in the soul as aims and ends.[1]

Again and again St. John of the Cross insists on this total purification of the will from all attachment to the created, to everything that is not God, and above all to self. " The goods of God, which are beyond all measure, can be contained only in an empty and solitary heart " (Maxim 349). Again, in the *Ascent of Carmel* : " Does it make any difference whether a bird be held by a slender thread or by a rope. . . . This is the state of a soul with particular attachments : it can never attain to the liberty of the divine union, whatever virtues it may possess." The kenosis of the will is far more important than that of the memory and the intellect in the general clearance of the field of consciousness. Ideas may be forgotten, but appetites are insistent. Our likes and dislikes, our loves and hates, have all the abounding vitality of weeds ; we may root them up, but if we leave a fragment of root it will sprout.

1 St. John of the Cross, Letter X (*The Living Flame*, p. 161).

Hence it is for all mystics that the preparation of the will is the most essential part. If the will be not fitted to respond to the negative imprint by being cleared of all positive attachment, it cannot be determined by it. God will not be thrust into the mean chamber of a servant, into the lumber-room of self.

> One desire only does God allow, and suffer in His presence, within the soul--the desire of keeping the law perfectly, and carrying the cross of Christ. It is not said, in the sacred writings, that God commanded anything to be laid up in the ark with the manna except the book of the law and the rod of Moses, a type of the cross of Christ (Maxim 342).

Such kenosis of the will is surely the most free of all human acts *to omit*, as it is the most difficult to effect, and hence in mystical experience the will is determined by the negative idea of God only because it wills to receive it. Thus even in ecstacy God is freely served.

This difficulty in the preparation of the will also meets the further objection that this theory of the negative idea of God imprinted directly on the will would justify the Quietists. Their root error was the claim to reach mystical experience by an active kenotic process. By creating a mental blank they claimed to find God experimentally. No doubt the mental blank can be created and a state of psychic lethargy attained, but unless the negative idea can be found and impressed on the will, detached from everything including self,

the result will only be a psychic coma more or less. Can we by our own efforts form the negative idea, can we effect the purification of the will to the extent needed to receive the impress? A suitable philosophical dialectic can give us the negative idea, but only as a negative. The psychic paradox of mystical experience is that a negative idea should have a positive reaction on the will without recourse to the lower experience from which it was derived by negation.[1] The intellect can only save itself from collapse before the void by this turning back, how then can it render dynamic what it cannot express? Is not the negative idea for the philosopher rather a psychic hypothesis than a psychic fact? For the mystic it is *the* fact, something given in experience, not inferred. It is but in externals that the idea of God of the mystic agrees with the ultimate conception of the philosopher, their dynamism is totally different and their psychic genesis. The philosopher elaborates his notion, to the mystic it comes as something given, as something often unexpected. It serves the philosopher as matter for discourse, for knowledge; it reduces the mystic's soul to silence and the unknowable is known in love. It is a conscious construction with the philosopher; for the mystic it is something dimly perceived in its effects. The philosopher must revert to a lower plane of experience if he would mentally realise his highest

1 Cf. Baker, *Holy Wisdom*, loc. super cit.

concept, the mystic must not look back if he would retain the gift.

It is evident, therefore, that if the soul does not now abandon its ordinary way of meditation, it will receive this gift of God in a scanty and imperfect manner, not in that perfection with which it is bestowed; for the gift being so grand, and an infused gift, cannot be received in this scanty and imperfect way. Consequently, if the soul will at this time make efforts of its own, and encourage another disposition than that of passive loving attention, most submissive and calm, and if it does not abstain from its previous discursive acts, it will place a barrier against those graces which God is about to communicate to it in this loving knowledge.[1]

It is by the reaction of his will that the mystic perceives the presence of the negative idea. St. Bernard in his commentary on the Canticle of Canticles declares, "The Word, the Spouse, coming into the depths of my soul has never made known His Presence to me by extraordinary means, neither by voice, nor by forms. I have felt His touch only in the movement of my heart, and I have found the might of His presence in the correction of my vices." The mystical experience comes suddenly and goes suddenly.[2] The discernment of the negative idea is only an analytical afterthought, when the soul tries to recall its experience and to describe it, if only to itself. The primarily conscious feature is the motion of the will, its fixation

1 St. John of the Cross, *The Living Flame*, stan. iii. § 37.

2 Cf. Poulain, *Les Graces d'Oraison*, chap. vii. par. 5, 5th ed. p. 111

by something beyond the powers of ordinary speech to describe, save in negatives. The negative idea is not *in consciousness* before the reaction of the will, it becomes dimly visible in that very reaction. It is inferred before it is perceived, if it can be truly said to be perceived. It is elusive and evades reflection, yet it is felt as an energetic reality. No process of abstraction will ensure its advent, no storm of distracting images can drive it away when the will is held fast, yet it will fly at the least wilful infidelity. Clearly this is not the philosophical notion of the Absolute: it is a something given, not derived.

Even if the Quietist could arrive at the negative idea, could he hope to adjust his will to the delicate temper fitted to receive it? Is it so easy to make abstraction of self in our affective part? We may abolish the "I" by enthusiastic resolutions, we may even try to crush it by a long ascesis, moral and psychic, such as St. John has given in details which terrify and even scandalize the ordinary devout Christian, in his *Ascent of Carmel*, and yet we may fail, and most probably will fail, to disintegrate that self which is our worst and most subtle enemy. Only by the truly horrible passive purgations of the Dark Night can self be finally destroyed so as to leave the will a fitting instrument for grace. Those who look on mystical experience as ecstatic hedonism should read that work of St. John of the Cross; it will enlighten them as to the suffer-

ings of contemplatives. St Teresa is as emphatic.

Daughters, I assure those of you whom God does not lead by the way of contemplation, that, both by observation and experience, I know that those following it do not bear a lighter cross than you : but indeed you would be aghast at the different kinds of trials God sends them. I know a great deal of both vocations, and am well aware that the sufferings God inflicts on contemplatives are of so unbearable a kind that, unless He sustained such souls by the manna of divine consolations, they would find their pains insupportable.

These sufferings were of no brief duration in the case of the greater mystical saints. St. Teresa endured them for eighteen years, St. Fransis of Assissi for two, St. Clair of Monte-Falco for fifteen, St Catharine of Bologna for five, St. Mary of Egypt for seventeen, St. Magdalen de Pazzi for five, to begin with, then for sixteen, Blessed Henry Suso for ten.[2] This Divine training of the will through suffering would be a needless cruelty if the will could be purified by resolution or a modest ascesis. There is no short and easy route up the mount of contemplation.

Blessed Albertus Magnus, in his commentary on the Mystical Theology of Dionysius, seems to insinuate the notion we have put forward, that the negative idea of God in mystical experience is a positive psychic element.

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1 *Way of Perfection*, chap. xviii. par.1, p. 112 (Baker, 1911).

2 Meynard, *De la Vie Intérieure*, vol. ii. p. 161.

There is no pure negation, but the receiving of a certain habitual light through which we draw near to the act of divine vision . . , it is no mere negation, but the mode of natural vision is denied, and the reception of supernatural light is left, which is the better signified by negation, because we do not find then anything known to us which we may with propriety predicate of God, on account of the eminence of His Simplicity, since the truth of the predication would rest on composition with an idea other than God (cum praedicationis veritas fundetur in alia compositione) : but, as Gregory says, "we sing stammering the high things of God."[1]

Denis the Carthusian, in his commentary on the same work, puts the point still more forcibly :—

In contemplation or mystical vision, when God is known by the withdrawal and denial of all things, He is known and seen more clearly and sublimely than in that contemplation called affirmative, so also objectively, yet not as What He is, but that He is, yet with a large approach to the knowledge of His Essence. Nevertheless in this contemplation the apex of the mind and the vertex of the of the intelligence is brought to union with God as wholly Unknown, and is plunged likewise wholly in darkness, and knows nothing whatsoever of Him ; not that it wholly withdraws from regarding Him ; seeing that this contemplation, knowledge and vision of the Deity is the highest, brightest, most perfect and deepest possible in this life, as Dionysius himself and his exponents testify ; but because in this contemplative union with God, which is most full of wis-

1 B. Albertus Magnus, *De Myst. Theol. S. Dionys.*, c. 2, n. 2. d. 1, ad 2 et 3, quoted Vives, *Compendium Theologiae Ascetico-Mysticae*, p. 379 (Rome : Pustet, 1908).

dom and fire, the mind sees most sharply and clearly how beyond all comprehension, beyond all glory, beyond all brightness, beyond all beauty, beyond all things loveable, and beyond all things that give joy is the Lord God Himself, Omnipotent and Measureless ; and how infinitely and incredibly it falls short and fails and is held from that full knowledge of Him, that blessed enjoyment of Him, the vision face to face immediate and direct.[1]

It must be remembered that this text is the formulation of a spiritual experience, not a mere abstract speculation. Like the Dionysius he is expounding, the explosion of superlatives reveals something more than a merely philosophical inference from a negative and abstract notion. It is an attempt to supply the reason why of an experience, vital and inexpressible, the reaction of the mind to the negative idea of God.

The union of intelligence and will, in one act, we find, likewise, in Blosius.

Few rise above their natural powers (and truly no one of himself by his own endeavour can pass beyond them, but God alone raises the man of persevering, humble prayer who does all that he can above them) ; few know of the *supreme affection*, the *simple intelligence*, the *apex of the spirit* and the *hidden depth* of the soul. In truth you cannot persuade most people that this depth is in us. For it is further within and more elevated than are the three higher powers of the soul, for it is the source of these powers. It is wholly simple, essential and uniform.

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1 B. Dion. Carth. in com. de Myst. Theol., a. 8, quoted in footnote in Vives, *Compendium Theol. Ascetico-Mysticae*, p. 179.

Wherefore in it there is not multiplicity, but unity, and those three higher powers are one Here is the highest tranquillity, the deepest silence, since no image can come here. By this depth (in which the Divine image is hidden) we are like unto God. The same depth which stretches to an abyss is called the heaven of the spirit, for in it is the kingdom of God, according to the saying of our Lord: *The Kingdom of God is within you.* But the Kingdom of God is God Himself with all His riches. Therefore that bare and unfigured depth is raised above all created things and above all the senses and powers of the soul, it transcends place and time, resting in a perpetual adhesion to God as its beginning; but is essentially within us, as it is the abyss of the soul and its inmost essence. This depth, which the Uncreated Light continually illuminates, when it is opened to man and begins to shine for him, marvellously affects and attracts him.[1]

1 Blosius, *Inst. Spirit.*, c. 12, quoted Meynard, vol. ii. p. 35.

CHAPTER III

VARIETIES OF MYSTICAL EXPERIENCE

We have seen that mystical experience is the reaction to the impress of the negative idea of God on the purified will. Its tone is essentially affective but with a cognitive feature apprehended in and by the affection. There is a fusion of cognition and affection in one act; their union is, as it were, substantial. It is a loving knowledge or rather a love that knows. The *verbum mentis*, the expressed word of the mind in mystical experience, is not the formulation of the intellect, but the utterance of the whole inner mind, intelligence, and will in one. If it were but the expression of intelligence we would have some concomitant image, whereas the absence of images, or their irrelevance when present, is a note of mystical experience on which all the descriptive mystics are agreed. The theorists object and invent systems of infused ideas or abstractions from sense data so directly apprehended, with such complete absence of psychic reflection, that they are unnoticed and impress the will unobserved. It is a systematic necessity which our theory avoids. These invisible, fully formed

cognitions, unobserved by the descriptive mystics, can only be acceptable when shown to be philosophically necessary. The operations of our middle psychic selves, the normal processes of understanding and will are much more simple and unified than the work of the senses, imagination and instincts, which make up our outer selves. Is it unreasonable to suppose that the operations of the inmost self are still more simple and unified? Mystical experience is something beyond a meditation reduced to a point.

The absence of images from mystical experience has been hotly contested by many theorists, but is a commonplace with the descriptive mystics. Père Poulain regards this absence of images as one of the characteristics of the mystical state and declares: "When philosophers study the functions of the human mind in its natural state, they justly have recourse to observation. Let them suffer the students of mysticism to act similarly in regard to a super-natural state."[1] It is a matter of observable fact, and the testimony of contemplatives as to the psychic character of their experiences should be accepted. It is true that images have been perceived, but they are not related to the state itself, and are in the nature of distractions, or "additional acts,' as Père Poulain has so aptly styled those psychic phenomena superadded to the central mystical experience.[2]

1 Poulain, *Les Grâces d'Oraison*, 5th ed., p. 119.

2 Ibid. p. 123.

But is there nothing in the way of an image to be found as part of a mystical experience? Is the spatial element wholly eliminated? Is there not more than a hint of a spatial image in the following, from the life of St. Alphonsus Rodriguez: "The bodily eyes see what is in front of them, not what is behind; but the eyes of the soul, which is a spirit, see not only what is before, but behind, on right and left. Thus the soul which is enclosed in God, enjoys, sees, and knows Him on all sides by means of that keen light which God gives it to see Him and relish Him."[1] This sense of space is an accompaniment of mystical experience, but it is in the nature of a psychic supplement. It has no relation to the experience itself which is not localised by the imagination. It is as if the imagination, fatigued by the void, created a minimum of representation to accompany the experience, Often there is a sense of light, sometimes of heat, as if the lower powers were tired of standing idle and sought to contribute their quota to the whole experience.[2] The effects of this co-operation by the lower self are sometimes very striking. Contemplatives, at the Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, have felt as if they were before a great and gentle furnace; the impression was more than imaginary or merely mental, it showed itself in a copious perspiration.

[1] Quoted Poulain, op. cit., footnote, p. 228.

[2] Cf. Poulain, op. cit., p. 229.

A sense of light, generally feeble, but quite distinct from that which filters through the closed eyelids, is fairly common. It comes and goes suddenly with the crises of the experience, varying in intensity with it. The power to endure muscular strain, as in kneeling upright and motionless without support, is increased to a quite remarkable extent,

Generally the action of mystical experience on the lower self is inhibitory. Even where the imagination is blank and the emotions stilled the senses are active to outside stimulation, but their activity is distinctly lowered when the mystical action is strong. Perhaps one of the most important of Père Poulain's contributions to the study of mysticism is his account of the various modes in which quite moderate mystical states, like the prayer of quiet, lower the sensibility.[1] There is a fog before the eyes, etc. These phenomena, trivial in themselves, are of importance in showing that during mystical experience there is an extraordinary concentration of vital energy. In ecstasy this is manifest enough, the body seems lifeless very often, but a similar withdrawal of vital force in lower mystical stages, very slight of course in comparison, had not been sufficiently observed prior to Père Poulain's great work. His theory that the prayer of quiet is a diminutive of the state of ecstasy has been

1 Ibid. p. 165.

sharply criticised by the Chanoine Saudreau,[1] who has not observed these phenomena of lowered external sensibility. Doubtless it is a matter of psychic temperament in the subjects under observation; some would be more affected than others. But the phenomenon is one that we might naturally expect, for a state of profound attention, even in normal psychic life, lowers the sensibility. The matter will have its importance when we come to consider the "ligature."

These effects go to show the extreme dynamism of the negative idea of God, which can so energise the will as to affect the whole man, even in his outer senses. Yet the idea itself is so abstract as to defy formulation by the intelligence. It is a Beyond of consciousness which the metaphysician cannot reach, save remotely by way of negation, and yet the conscious results of its impress on the will are startling even to the very senses. It comes suddenly, not as the ultimate of a process of abstraction, but as an agent seen in its effects. Is it infused by grace, or does grace enable the mystic to abstract it from the given of sense and of faith as it were by an intuitive glance? The latter would seem the preferable view, as it retains mystical experience exclusively in the order of faith. The special action of grace would be what the theologian ascribes to the *donum intellectus*, and above all to the

1 *Les Faits Extraordinaires de la Vie Spirituelle* (Paris: Vic et Amat, 1908, p. 200).

donum sapientiae. But the mode in which the negative idea is formed is beyond the purview of the psychologist; all he can know is that its origin is not the result of a process of conscious abstraction. The psychic kenosis of the field of consciousness merely clears away obstacles, it does not create the experience. That process of recollection which is essential to mystical experience does not seem to the subject at all akin psychologically to the philosophical abstraction by process of negation. It is a seeking to find something that is there, but invisible, by concentrating the attention and disregarding the normally visible, a peering into the shadows, rather than the attempt to filter out the invisible residue from the normally visible of which it forms part. Take the analogy of a photographic negative. If we hold it up against the light we see the picture, but with light and shade reversed, very clear and distinct. Unless we take a print from the negative we can but dimly guess at what the original is like. We can see the outlines and details sharply, but it would require a rare gift of visual abstraction to mentally reverse the scheme of light and shade. But if we place the negative on a piece of black velvet, and view it by reflected light at a certain angle, we can see it clearly, but very faintly, as a positive. The analogy is crude, like all physical analogies to psychic processes, but it illustrates how an image may be at once a negative, and a

positive, according to the mode of vision. As we see the positive in the negative by obscuring the negative as such, so we reach the negative idea with the will, by shutting out from consciousness the normally positive elements. The negative idea is there all the time, but obscured by what is more evident. "Videmus nunc per speculum in ænigmate" (1 Cor. xiii., 12). In the mirror of God's creatures the contemplative peers out the Answer to the riddle of existence.

The action of grace does not merely consist in enabling the soul to find this negative idea, but to apperceive it with the will. As St. Bonaventure declares: "The gift of wisdom, in the stricter sense, signifying the experimental knowledge of God, has its chief act which consists in affection."[1] The reaction of the will in love is the most conscious feature of mystical experience. Cognition of a sort is a later development and resultant of affection. The will is conscious that it is seized and held as no reflection of created things can hold it. There is an immediate inference as to cause, so immediate as to appear intuitive. The act is not a syllogism, an argument, but rather akin to the animal instinct, in its immediate leap from particular to particular. The lamb fears the the first wolf he sees; the inmost self, touched by

1 'Donum sapientiae, prout pressius sumitur, significans Dei experimentalem cognitionem, habet actum praecipuum in affectione consistentem.'—Conclusio Dist. xxxv. a. 1, q. 1.

God, knows the Master's touch. Père Poulain rejects the notion of inference and insists on intuition;[1] but apart from the grave theological objections to his view of mystical experience as an intuition, an attenuation as it were of the Beatific Vision, his theory does not save the phenomena in certain cases, such as the Night of the Spirit, recognised by all authorities as unquestionably mystical.

He considers that the real difference between mystical experience and the recollection of ordinary prayer is that:

> In the mystical state God is no longer satisfied with helping us to *think* of Him and to *remember* His presence, but He gives us an experimental intellectual knowledge of this presence. . . . There is a profound difference between *thinking* of a person, and *feeling* him near one. When we thus feel someone near us, we may say we have an experimental knowledge of his presence. In ordinary prayer one has only an abstract knowledge of the presence of God.[2]

Hence he contends for a perception of God in mystical experience analogous to our sense perception of objects in normal experience. From this comes his famous discriminant of the mystic state, *the presence of God felt.* He admits that in the lower mystical

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[1] *Les Graces d'Oraison*, 5th ed., p. 68. For the fuller criticism of Père Poulain's theory, see Saudreau, *Les Faits Extraordinaires de la Vie Spirituelle*, chap. iv.; and Delacroix, *Ascetique et Mystique* (Paris: Bloud, pp. 44 et seq.).

[2] Poulain, op. cit., p. 66.

states this felt presence is very obscure and hardly perceived ; but he insists on its being the psychological essence of mystical experience, for, in answer to those who would define it as a union with God by love, he urges :—

We must add that this love is provoked by a known experimental possession of God. That is where it differs from the love one has in the ordinary way of prayer. By itself the Divine love does not make God known as present in the soul. You would have quite similar feelings for absent friends. You are joined in memory and heart with them ; but that is very different from a grasp of the hand.[1]

The descriptions of their experience by the mystics go to show that there is in mystical contemplation a very real sense of the presence of God, more substantial, so to speak, than in ordinary prayer, but is it the spiritual sensation, the direct perception, Père Poulain contends ? The texts he cites will bear another interpretation, as Saudreau and others have shown. Is the psychic factor of love to be neglected in this "*perception*" ? Has not Père Poulain concentrated too much on the cognitive element in the "sense" of presence and overlooked the affective factor ?

Our "*sense*" of another's presence is largely affected by our feelings in regard to him. A devout Catholic kneeling at Mass is hardly disturbed by another person

[1] Ibid. p. 67.

coming into the bench, if that person is a total stranger But if he is an old friend, not seen for many years, or someone personally disliked, the distraction is very vehement, and the recovery of recollection a difficult task. Surely the *presence* in the two instances is very different? The cognition of physical presence is the same, but its apperception by the will varies and reacts vehemently on the sensible cognition and on the whole field of consciousness. The tone value of the experience is altered, the given of sense remain the same, but they are received into a different affective consciousness. Are we not acutely conscious of the presence of what we vehemently dislike, can we not almost see it in the dark?

The putting oneself in the presence of God of ordinary prayer and meditation is too often, alas! but a pitiful formalism, of but small psychic value. Even where this act of faith is made devoutly and from the heart, it is the expression of an intellectual assent to a dogmatic truth rather than a cordial realisation of a fact.[1] The notion of the presence of God is but one element in the field of consciouness among a vast crowd of others whose dynamism is greater as they come closer to our senses. The idea of God, so abstract and above our power to grasp with a sense of

[1] We must not be taken as minimising the spiritual value of this act of faith as a prelude to prayer; we are considering its psychological import *solely* in this context.

reality, must needs remain a feeble element in consciousness, however much we strive to reinforce it. We know that He is present, yet we must ever cry, "I believe; Lord, help my unbelief," Is it strange. then, that the sense of presence is feeble, even in fervent ordinary prayer?

But the idea of God comes into mystical experience very differently, as we have seen. It is no longer a feebly dynamic element coming into a crowd. It comes to its own place in the apex of the mind and with its own immense dynamism. The will reacts, not feebly and perfunctorily, as to a shadow, but with a quite extraordinary vigour of love. The simple act of faith in God's presence becomes the cordial realisation of a fact. The presence of God is felt because His presence acknowledged by faith is *realised* in love. It is a "*sense*" of God here and now, an instinct of the Divine, but it does not cease to be a simple act of faith, *fidei formatissimae*, "Quia actus appetitivae virtutis est quaedam inclinatio ad rem ipsam, secundum quamdam similitudinem, ipsa applicatio appetitivae virtutis ad rem, secundum quod ei inhaeret, accipit nomen *sensus*, quasi experientiam quamdam sumens de re, cui inhaeret, inquantum complacit sibi in ea."[1] Thus St. Thomas seems to

[1] *Summa*, Ia. IIae. Q. 15 a.l.c. "Since appetition is an inclining towards the object itself by reason of a certain likeness it follows that the clinging of the appetite to the object it desires receives the name of "*sense*" as being an experience of the object to which it clings according to the extent of its complacency therein."

recognise a "*sense*" as proceeding from the affective powers, which gives an experimental knowledge.

In the question of the "ligature" that group of psychic inhibitions caused by a mystical experience, there is also a disagreement between Père Poulain and the Chanoine Saudreau. The former asserts, the latter denies, that it is present in states lower than ecstasy.[1] Bossuet brought the term into fashion in his *Instruction sur les états d'oraison*, when discussing the characteristics of the passive state according to approved mystics.

The passive state is a state of suspension and ligature of the intellectual powers or faculties, in which the soul remains powerless to produce discursive acts. Attention must be given to this last phrase, for the intention of these doctors is not to exclude free acts from their prayer . . . which could be made without discourse, but acts where one excites oneself by a discourse or preceding reflection. . . And here is a great change in the way of the soul's operations. For the soul, accustomed to reason and to arouse its affections by the consideration of certain motives, suddenly, as if impelled by a mighty hand, not alone ceases to discourse, but no longer is able to discourse; and this causes other inabilities during the period of prayer.[2]

Bossuet, as usual, exaggerates. The ligature does

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1 Cf. Saudreau, *Les Faits Extraordinaires*, chap. vi. section 2, p. 199.

2 Bossuet, *Instr. sur les états d'oraison*, l.vii. No. 9, quoted Poulain, p. 194.

not cause a total impotence, only a difficulty, greater or less, as the case may be. Often it is a mere disinclination, an absence of the *velle*, not the *posse*. Only in cases of ecstasy is there total inhibition.

A withdrawal of the lower powers from use occurs in rapture, because there is then no employment for them; but usually, in divine contemplation, there is no withdrawal of the faculties from use, for they continue usable to some extent, but only from full activity, because the soul pays no heed to their operation and their action is weakened, for when the action of one power grows more intense, that of another is weakened, as Aristotle declares.[1]

We have similar inhibitions in normal psychic action; severe pain paralyses our mental powers.

Since all the powers of the soul are rooted in the one essence of the soul it necessarily follows that, when the intention of the soul is vehemently drawn to the operation of any one power, it is withdrawn from the operation of another; for each one soul can have but one intention, and on account of this, if anything attracts to itself the whole intention of the soul, or a great part of it, it will not suffer anything else besides which requires great attention.[2]

St. Thomas goes on to show how pain will absorb all attention and not suffer one to acquire new knowledge, or even reflect on what we know, if very severe. Hence, mystical experience which absorbs the attention of the whole soul, must necessarily lower the

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1 B. Alberti Magni, *Comm. in lib. de Myst. Theol. Dion.* c. I. No. 6 B. Dub. I. ad 1, quoted Meynard, footnote, vol. ii. p. 13.

2 *Summa Theologica* D. Thomae, Ia. IIae. Q. 37, a. 1.c.

intensity of consciousness in all that does not concern it. Far from being extraordinary the ligature is what we might naturally expect to find from the ordinary principles which explain psychic activity. Its extent, of course, depends on the intensity with which the attention is held fixed. In very light cases of the prayer of quiet it might hardly be noticed and of course, temperament plays a great part ; hence come in all probability the doubts of the Chanoine Saudreau. Those in whom the mystical experience is at all intense seldom fail to notice a strange and unwonted difficulty in reciting vocal prayers requiring any considerable degree of attention. Short, easily memorised, prayers may be repeated without difficulty, or longer prayers read where the attention given is general ; but when the mind tries to follow the meaning of the vocal prayer, or to indulge in reflections and considerations of its own, there is a sense of oblivion, of stupidity, of actual inhibition which is both striking and disconcerting to the inexperienced. The attention is elsewhere and better engaged, though the soul may not perceive it at first. If the soul were conscious of its own attention, it would not be surprised at the phenomena of the ligature ; they would seem quite ordinary and to be expected as a matter of course.

St. John of the Cross makes use of the phenomena of the ligature, inability to meditate in the accustomed way, joined to a growing "sense" of the presence of

God, as the index of the soul's entrance on mystical experience.[1] Inability to meditate may proceed from some neurose or morbid psychose; the hysterical, the psychasthenic, the melancholic may be unable to construct their meditation as usual, they may experience a ligature, but their morbid state is sufficient to account for it. Or it may proceed from moral and spiritual slackness, from that *accidie* which the late Bishop of Oxford has so well described,[2] from the deadly sin of sloth. Hence the necessity to verify the absence of disease, physical or spiritual, before assigning mystical experience as the cause of the inability to meditate. In his directions, St. John of the Cross gives three tests :—

The first is this : when we find no comfort in the things of God, and none also in created things. For when God brings the soul into the dark night in order to wean it from sweetness and to purge the desire of sense, He does not allow it to find sweetness or comfort anywhere. It is then probable, in such a case, that this dryness is not the result of sins or imperfections recently committed; for if it were, we should feel some inclination or desire for other things than those of God. Whenever we give the reins to our desires in the way of any imperfection, our desires are instantly attracted to it, much or little, in proportion to the affection for it. But still, inasmuch as this absence of pleasure in the things of heaven and of earth may pro-

1 *Ascent of Carmel*, Bk. II, chap. 13 et seq.; *Dark Night*, Bk. I, chap. 9.

2 Paget, *The Sorrow of the World* (Longmans, 1912).

ceed from bodily indisposition or a melancholy temperament, which frequently causes dissatisfaction with all things, the second test and condition become necessary.

The second test and condition of this purgation are that the memory dwells ordinarily upon God with a painfull anxiety and carefulness, the soul thinks it is not serving God, but going backwards, because it is no longer conscious of any sweetness in the things of God. In that case it is clear that this weariness of spirit and aridity are not the results of weakness and lukewarmness; for the peculiarity of lukewarmness is the want of earnestness in, and of interior solicitude for, the things of God. There is therefore, a great difference between dryness and lukewarmness, for the latter consists in great remissness and weakness of will and spirit, in the want of all solicitude about serving God. The true purgative aridity is accompanied in general by a painful anxiety, because the soul thinks that it is not serving God.[1]

The third sign we have for ascertaining whether this dryness be the purgation of sense, is inability to meditate and make reflections, and to excite the imagination, as before, notwithstanding all the efforts we may make; for God begins now to communicate Himself, no longer through the channel of sense, as formerly, in consecutive reflections, by which we arranged and divided our knowledge, but in pure spirit, which admits not of successive reflections, and in the act of pure contemplation, to which neither the interior nor the exterior senses of our lower nature can ascend. Hence it is that the fancy and the imagination cannot help or suggest any reflections, nor use them ever afterwards.

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1 *Dark Night* (Baker, p. 34).

It is understood here that this embarrassment and dissatisfaction of the senses do not arise out of any bodily ailment. When they arise from this, the indisposition, which is always changeable, having ceased, the powers of the soul recover their former energies, and find their previous satisfactions at once. It is otherwise in the purga tion of the appetite, for as soon as we enter upon this, the inability to make our meditations continually grows.[1]

Expressed in terms of the theory we have suggested, this psychic process, the Dark Night of Sense, would take this form. The negative idea of God is impressed on the, as yet, unpurified will. On account of its impurities, its attachment to self and to created things, the will cannot react to the impress with that love which gives the "sense" of presence, but it is disturbed, and vehemently. There is conflict between the affective absorption in the negative idea and the attachments to the positive manifold of consciousness. When the attraction of the negative idea prevails psychic energy is withdrawn from the normal field and concentrated in the apex. Hence the weakening of the normal elements of consciousness and the gradual disintegration of the field during the period of action of the negative idea on the will. The will is withdrawn from what it formerly loved and esteemed but nature is reluctant and the concentration of vital energy is painful and wearisome. With the gradual withdrawal of the will from the created it becomes

1 Ibid., p. 39.

more apt to respond to the impress of the negative idea, and hence comes the growing "sense" of the presence of God. The very process of mystical experience in its inchoate stage is a purgation before it becomes an illumination. In the more terrible Dark Night of the Spirit the illumination itself becomes the purgation.

This second purgation, which falls to the lot of but few, is much more severe than the first. Those who have passed through the first night, the night of sense, have had their wills purified from attachment to the things of sense. "The stains of the old man still remain in the spirit, though not visible to it, and if they be not removed by the strong soap and lye of the purgation of this night, the spirit cannot attain to the pureness of the divine union."[1] The "I" is not wholly destroyed, the old habits have left their traces, there are many imperfections of which the soul is unconscious. "Delicta quis intelligit? ab occultis meis munda me" (Ps. xviii. 13).

The dark night is a certain inflowing of God into the soul which cleanses it of its ignorances and imperfections, habitual, natural, and spiritual.[2]

But it may be asked: Why does the soul call the divine light, which enlightens the soul and purges it of its ignorances, the dark night? I reply, that the divine wisdom is, for two reasons, not night and darkness only, but

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1 St. John of the Cross, *Dark Night* (Baker, p. 71). 2 Ibid. p. 78

pain and torment also to the soul. The first is, the divine wisdom is so high that it transcends the capacity of the soul, and therefore is, in that respect, darkness. The second reason is based on the meanness and impurity of the soul, and in that respect the divine wisdom is painful to it, afflictive and dark also.[1]

St, John compares the soul to an owl in the noonday sun, blinded by excess of light.

It is for this reason that St. Dionysius and other mystic theologians call infused contemplation a ray of darkness, that is, for the unenlightened and unpurified soul, because this great supernatural light masters the natural power of the reason and takes away its natural way of understanding. . . This dim contemplation is, in its beginnings, painful also to the soul. For as the infused divine contemplation contains many excellences in the highest degree, and the soul, which is the recipient, because not yet pure, is involved in many miseries, the result is—as two contraries cannot co-exist in the same subject—that the soul must suffer and be in pain.[2]

When the rays of this pure light strike upon the soul, in order to expel its impurities, the soul perceives itself to be so unclean and miserable that it seems as if God had set Himself against it, and itself were set against God. . . The soul seeing distinctly in this bright and pure light, though dimly, its own impurity, acknowledges its own unworthiness before God and all creatures. That which pains it still more is the fear it has that it never will be worthy, and that all its goodness is gone.[3]

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1 *Dark Night*, p. 79. 2 Ibid. p. 80. 3 Ibid. p. 81.

This little catena of texts from St. John of the Cross gives the general idea of this form of mystical experience which he describes at length in the *Dark Night*, Book II. Let us see how our psychological theory will apply to it. In the Night of Sense the negative idea detached the will from its affections to created things and, in thus purifying it, enabled it to respond to the impress with love, giving a growing "sense" of the presence of God. In this purgation the negative idea has only a limited dynamism adjusted by grace to the capacity of the will. It is the revelation by faith of God to the will as the Supreme Good. But in the Night of the Spirit the negative idea has a new and terrible force, it is no longer doled out to meet the will's capacity, it is excessive and awful in its energy It is now the revelation of God to the will as the Supreme Holiness, one veil of the Godhead has been withdrawn and the soul is scalded in light. The will cannot react with that love which gives comfort and the "sense" of presence, it is terrified and its love finds self-expression in a fearful sense of its own unworthiness. The will feels the vast gulf between itself and its Love. Imperfections and failings, forgotten and self-forgiven faults, swarm up from the depths of the deepest oblivion and the soul sees itself a leper. The will is dragged from its End by the weight of its sins, no longer seen by the rushlight of reason, but in the blaze of Divine justice. The will feels sin as

it is, an offence against Infinite Holiness, and this consciousness of sin causes a "sense" of remoteness from God which is a "sense" of absence. It is the absence of God, not His presence, which is felt in the Dark Night of the Spirit.

Hence those feelings of despair, approaching to the conviction of damnation, which we find in the narratives of mystics who have passed through this experience. It differs from the most acute "conviction of sin" in the revivalistic conversion-psychose. "They who enter this night have, generally, had much sweetness in God, and served him greatly; but now, to see themselves strangers to so much happiness, and unable to recover it, causes them the greatest affliction."[1] It is not due to despair as a mere failure of hope, to lack of "assurance," as Protestant theologians would term it, but to the sense of their own vileness and the Holiness of God.

In this purgation

The desires of sense and spirit are lulled to sleep and mortified, unable to relish anything either human or divine; the affections of the soul are thwarted and brought low, become helpless, and have nothing to rest upon; the imagination is fettered, and unable to make any profitable reflections, the memory is gone, and the will, too, is dry and afflicted, and all the faculties are empty, and, moreover, a dense and heavy cloud overshadows the soul, distresses it and holds it as if it were far away from God.[2]

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1 *Dark Night*, p. 89. 2 *Dark Night*, p. 133.

By this process the last roots of self-will, of self-complacency, are grubbed up. As the ultra-violet rays of the solar spectrum kill off bacteria, so the negative idea of God kills off the hidden defects of the will and fits it for a fuller experience.

There is a third purgation on the mystic way, which St. Teresa has described as preceding the highest state of union with God, that habitual presence which mystics call the spiritual marriage.:—

> This is a trance of the senses and faculties of the soul, for everthing else combines, as I told you, to make the agony more intense. The understanding realises acutely what cause there is for grief in separation from God, and His Majesty now augments this sorrow by a vivid manifestation of Himself, thus increasing her anguish to such a degree that the sufferer gives vent to loud cries, which she cannot stifle, however patient and accustomed to pain she may be, because this torture is not corporal, but attacks the innermost recesses of the soul.[1]

This is the dart of love, a new enforcement of the idea of God, revealing Him as the Infinite Reward, the Final End of the soul.

The type of mystical phenomena which has attracted most attention from the agnostic psychologist is the ecstasy. Ecstasy may be defined as a mystical experience of such intensity that the normal sense relations of the soul with the outward world are completely suspended, the subject perceives

[1] *Interior Castle*, Mansion VI., chap. xi. par. 3.

nothing of what is going on around him, is most frequently incapable of movement, and cannot terminate the experience at will. The loss of sensibiliy and movement make ecstasy analogous to certain morbid states, like catalepsy or intoxication by opium, but it is sharply differentiated from these states in its sequel, a notable addition of moral energy. In some types of ecstasy there is speech and movement but the subject remains unconscious of his surroundings. This will suggest analogies to certain hypnotic states, but with analogous differences in the moral value of the sequel. The hypnotic subject is not notably improved by his experience, either physically or morally, but the ecstatic shows increased willpower in the pursuit of moral good. The hypnotic subject may be roused by whoever has hypnotised him; the ecstatic can only be recalled by someone to whom moral obedience is due, a director, a religious superior, etc. The recall of an ecstatic is essentially a moral act, and has been exercised by those to whom the superior has delegated authority for the purpose.

Thus it is that even in the external manifestation of this experience there is a marked difference from the morbid or quasi-morbid states to which it has been assimilated.[1]

The subjective experience of ecstatics is of immense

[1] Cf. Poulain, op. cit., chap. xviii., and Saudreau, *Les Faits Extraordinaires*, chap. vi.

variety, with one marked characteristic in common: an immense psychic activity, a sense of life more full than ordinary, This feature of inner activity is a standing challenge to agnostic psychology, which first treated it as an illusion, a hallucination, and then sought to explain it by reduction to a pure affective state. Murisier thus analyses an advanced mystical state:—

What is this simple idea of the Divinity which takes the place of the complex vision and the associations which have been got rid of? It is often an abstract idea analogous to the idea of good, the supreme object of the meditations of Plotinus, or to the law of the causality of pain, whose knowledge leads the Buddhist to the repose of Nirvana. It is oftener a vague confused image, drawn from earlier representations, or rather it is the residue of these representations which are fused, drained, simplified by the gradual blotting-out of distinction and contour. . . The isolated image, the sovereign light, is soon in turn extinguished. Memory, imagination, even understanding is lost, as the mystics say.[1]

He declares that ecstasy ends in the annihilation of personality, that it is an absolutely monoideistic state, with finally a total extinction of consciousness. We reduce the field of consciousness to one idea, we concentrate on that one idea abstractively until it vanishes from consciousness. Thus we get the idea

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1 *Les maladies du sentiment religieux* (Alcan, 1901, p. 61), quoted Poulain, p. 273.

of Nothing, and basing ourselves on the maxim that "where there is nothing, there is God," we direct all our affective energy to that nothing; and in so doing get an affective sense of God which, if pushed to the psychic breaking-point, results in unconsciousness, and so we have ecstasy. Now, this process may well account for the Buddhist "ecstacy," as it would conceivably produce a psychic and somatic lethargy; it might even explain the alleged ecstasies of Plotinus, for their affective value may have been only a psychic throw-back, the retrojection of an emotion, subsequent to the state, into the state itself by an easy illusion of memory; but it is inadequate to account psychologically for the relations of ecstasies we find in St. Teresa, Blessed Angela of Foligno, St. Catherine of Siena, and other mystics. Clearly, the experience St. Teresa refers to, in the following passage, is quite other than a purely negative Nirvana:—

"But," you will ask me, "if the mind cannot afterwards remember the very sublime favours Our Lord bestows in this mansion, what profit do they bring it?" O my daughters! their value cannot be over-rated, for though the recipient is incapable of describing them, they are deeply imprinted in the centre of the soul and are never forgotten. "How can they be remembered, if nothing is seen, and the powers of the soul do not comprehend them?" I, too, do not undertand this, but I know that certain truths of the greatness of God remain so impressed on the spirit by this favour, that, did not faith teach it Who He is and

that it is bound to believe He is God, it would henceforth worship Him as such, as Jacob did when he saw the ladder[1]

Does not this, too, reveal a cognitive, as well as an affective activity ?—

Before the soul fell into the trance, it thought itself to be careful about not offending God, and that it did what it could in proportion to its strength ; but now that it has attained to this state, in which the Sun of Justice shines upon it, and makes it open its eyes, it beholds so many motes that it would gladly close them again. It is not so truly the child of the noble eagle that it can gaze upon the sun ; but, for the few instants it can keep them open, it beholds itself wholly unclean. It remembers the words : " Who shall be just in Thy presence ? " When it looks on this Divine Sun, the brightness thereof dazzles it —when it looks on itself, its eyes are blinded by the dust ; the little dove is blind. So it happens very often : the soul is utterly blinded, absorbed, amazed, dizzy at the vision of so much grandeur. It is in rapture that true humility is acquired—humility that will never say any good of self, nor suffer others to do so.[2]

To awaken such interior energy a mere philosophical abstraction would be absurdly inadequate. We might produce a state of coma or lethargy, but we could hardly arrive at an outward coma and an interior super-activity. Ecstasy is not a depression of activity, but an augmentation by concentration. The negative idea of God is impressed on the will with such measure and proportion that it wholly absorbs

1 St. Teresa, *Interior Castle*, Mansion VI, chap. iv. par. 6.
2 St. Teresa, *Life*, chap. xx. par. 37 (Baker, 1904, p. 169).

its affective energy, and derivatively drains all the other psychic energies. Hence, during the experience, the soul has no force left, save what suffices to maintain the animal life in existence. A little more and the mystic would cease to live. Breathing almost ceases, the bodily temperature falls, the physical state seems almost like death to the onlooker. And with this collapse of the bodily organism there is this superabundant psychic life, showing itself, when the ecstatic recovers normal consciousness, often in some sudden and extraordinary progress in virtue. That ecstasy involves a lowering of psychic activity is in flat contradiction with the testimony of those who have ex perienced it, the only competent witnesses as to the psychic facts. If we accept their relations as psychological documents, we are not entitled to explain them by a process which would justly deprive them of all evidential value. Scientific probity must respect the integrity of the fact.

It is during ecstasy, as a rule, that the Saints have received those particular favours, visions, locutions, and revelations which are distinct in character from the general obscure contemplation of mystical experience. These are of a charismatic order, being essentially *gratiae gratis datae*, and psychology has nothing to say to them, when genuine. When the visions or locutions are perceived by the senses or the imagination there is ample room for illusions of every kind. St. John of

the Cross devotes several chapters of his *Ascent of Carmel* to showing how illusion may be detected, and even modern psychology adds but little to what he has said, despite our greater knowledge of morbid psychoses. The intellectual visions or locutions, higher phenomena where the idea is communicated to the intellect directly without images or any given of sense, are less liable to illusion as they are more supernatural. Their reality has been challenged by those who deny their possibility *a priori*; so have miracles. You cannot prove either to the man who denies God. St. John of the Cross is very formal in his doctrine that these extraordinary favours should not be sought after, desired, or even dwelt upon.[1]

Père Poulain, as we have seen, marks off very sharply mystical experience from what he considers the non-mystical prayer of simplicity. The Chanoine Saudreau and Père de Besse would separate ordinary mystical contemplation from the extraordinary or miraculous type, such as ecstasy obviously is. These

1 Cf. St. John of the Cross, *Ascent of Carmel*, Bk. III. chap. 7. "The spiritual director must be therefore careful not to make his penitent narrow-minded by attaching any importance to these supernatural visitations; for they are nothing else but the motes of the Spirit, and he who shall give his attention to these alone will in the end have no spirituality at all. Yea, rather let him wean him from all visions and locutions, and guide him into the liberty and darkness of faith, where he shall receive of the abundance of the Spirit, and consequently the knowledge and understanding of the words of God."—*Ascent of Carmel*, Bk. II. chap. 19 par. 13.

boundaries are somewhat artificial, for who can tell the precise point of division ? The prayer of simplicity melts into the prayer of quiet, and quiet deepens to union ; union flames to ecstasy, and ecstasy passes in the spiritual marriage. They are rather subjective divisions, varying with each soul which is favoured with mystical experience. In themselves they may well be one in essence, but individuated by the spiritual progress of the mystic. All are in the order of faith. That which we have called the negative idea of God, because it can only be expressed by negations, which seems to vanish into nothingness when we try to formulate it, yet which has such stupendous dynamism when impressed on the will, may well be that unknown psychic element in an act of divine faith which marks it off so sharply in our experience from merely human or scientific faith. If that be so, if the metanoetic element in the faith of the everyday Catholic be the latent mystic idea of God, the *prima veritas*, in which and by which we believe, then we have a golden thread which links up the prayer of the most ordinary of the faithful with the ecstatic orison of the great saint. We would then be able to trace out the progress of spiritual experience, from the conversion-psychose to ecstasy, as a continuous growth in faith, the stages being set by the degrees of charity attained by the soul. We will take this theological continuity and look at it from the psychological point of view of the

reaction of the will to the impress of the negative idea of God.

When this negative idea is first found in the innermost self by grace, be it by infusion from without or by aiding the powers of the soul to push abstraction from the given of consciousness beyond the natural psychic ultimate, it is unrecognised, but not, in a measure unfelt. Its proper place is the apex of the will, as it is formed in the apex of the intelligence, but in the unconverted there is little or no vital energy to be found there. The whole force of the soul is spent in the lower planes of consciousness, the inner man is extroverted, turned towards the things of sense and of self. The first action of the negative idea is general and gradual, an unconscious drawing of the will towards itself. There is a faint growth of vital energy in the apex of the soul, and any increase there means a large diversion from the total sum of vital energy. There the vital potential is at its highest, and, to supply it, the vital potential in the lower will and other powers must decrease. Hence, the sense of discomfort, of incapacity, of disrelish for customary acts which goes with the early stages of the conversion psychose. The invisible, unfelt attraction draws away the soul from the things to which it was attached. There is the sense of stress, of conflict. The old habits and feelings grow weaker, there is less attraction towards them. As the drawing of the centre increases,

the ordinary field of consciousness loses more and more of its psychic energy. Vices lose their grip and there is an increase, as it were by suction, in the number of centres of volitional instability. There is an analogous process in the cognitive order. Views are weakened, the power of intellectual prejudice lowered. The will is no longer forcibly attracted to them and ceases to buttress the cognitive element by its affections. What is doubtful and hypothetical in these views becomes more apparent when the agreeable in them ceases to attract. There is a sense of intellectual deficiency generated, a loss of the cocksure spirit, a growing conflict felt with truth, an expanding doubt and desire for knowledge. Again, suction creates centres of instability. Given the advent from without of the nascent idea, the field of consciousness is already sapped and mined, and disintegration with reformation follows. Under the growing attraction of the negative idea the conscious elements regroup themselves. All the while the soul is unconscious of this central attraction in itself, but it realises a something beyond itself yet within, when it observes the steady direction of the whole psychic process. There is a sense of an invisible educator aiding and shaping what comes from without. The interior attraction cooperates with the preacher.

But although the will is thus attracted by the negative idea, the action must be reinforced before it

can react with that conscious love which gives the "sense" of presence. The mere readjustment of the field of consciousness is in itself a "natural" process; it does not pass beyond the power of ordinary psychic methods to accomplish. The soul continues extroverted, although its point of view is changed. The "self" has been drilled but not substantially altered. The "I" has been taught to look to God, but it still stands erect. Self-will has been rectified, but it is still self-will. Before the negative idea can exert its specific action the will must be purified, as we have seen in the Night of Sense. Then mystical experience proper begins, as it continues, in suffering. It is very probable that more Christians receive mystical experience than is usually thought, still the vast bulk do not progress much beyond a well-directed cultivation of the self for God. They build up their characters admirably, but it is *their* characters. They will not lose all, including self, to find all; and so they remain in the middle passage. Others have to fulfill active duties; their vocation is that of Martha, busied about many things. Only the comparatively few correspond with the inward energies of the negative idea and make progress in the mystic way.

There is a psychic parallelism between the conversion-psychose and the Night of Sense, indeed the latter psychose has been termed mystical conversion. St. John of the Cross has compared the three mystical

nights to periods of darkness in the natural night—the early dark of sense, the black midnight of the spirit, and the dark that precedes the dawn. If we take this analogy, the conversion-psychose would be represented by the twilight. By a kindred metaphor, the prayer of quiet would represent the first streaks of dawn and ecstasy the glory of the noontide. The miraculous and extraordinary features are but the individual accidents of the various states; they may well serve to delimit frontiers from the director's point of view, but the states, in themselves, show a continuity, a growth. Now, growth is never uniform, for it is a vital, not a mechanical, act; it may be checked and promoted by activity, but it is largely independent of our efforts. It is only those weeds, our sins and failings, whose rate of growth we can wholly direct, for that is all we own in the garden of the soul. The seed the Master plants, we can only water and watch. We cannot turn the violet into the rose, or change the dwarf into the full-sized variety, but we can keep off the slugs and keep the blooms fresh.

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